

DOCTORAL THESIS

Domestic Culture in Woman's Weekly, 1918-1958

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Domestic Culture in *Woman's Weekly*, 1918-1958

by

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**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of PhD**

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Abstract

Woman's Weekly was launched in 1911 as a manual for servantless housewives. In 2018, it remains a stalwart of the British popular women's magazine market. This thesis, the first ever depth study of *Woman's Weekly*, explores the domestic culture produced by the magazine between the end of the First World War in November 1918, and 1958. Broadly, its aims are twofold: to map changes and continuities in *Woman's Weekly's* domestic culture during the period, and to produce a new, literary methodology for surveying periodical form. The latter is based on romance, the genre to which the vast majority of *Woman's Weekly* fiction printed during the period belongs, and focuses closely on the magazine's visual discourses as well as its verbal texts.

A primary interest of this thesis is social class. The domestic culture constructed by *Woman's Weekly*, it argues, is lower middle class; it draws out this distinctive status through strategic comparisons to other magazines, and also to other literary works by contemporary writers. Its aims in doing so are to suggest that popular domestic magazines target highly specific demographics; to broaden existing understandings of lower-middle-class domestic culture; and to challenge critical assumptions that lower-middle-class culture is a cheap, bogus reproduction of leisure-class culture. Six chapters, surveying a sample of magazines from 1918-1919, 1928, 1938-1939, 1940-1945, 1948 and 1958, explore what makes domestic culture in *Woman's Weekly* distinctively lower middle class during a period in which British culture and the English class system underwent tremendous and rapid change.

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Notes about Referencing

To limit the size of my footnote references, when citing books and journal articles I use only one or two words of the title in repeat citations.

When citing magazine titles, subtitles and taglines, I have retained the original capitals (in footnotes and the Bibliography). Some titles, subtitles, and taglines are originally printed in full capitals – where this is the case, I have used ‘house style’ in my citations. (*Woman’s Weekly* tends to capitalise the first letter of every word, for instance, so I have used this convention).

I cite some magazine texts in more than one context; some magazine texts are serialised in more than one issue. For clarity therefore, I give all magazine citations, including repeat citations, in full, except where it is very obvious that I am quoting repeatedly from the same feature. In these instances, I use author’s surname (if applicable), shortened title and *ibid.*, as with secondary sources. Where I quote repeatedly from the same story serialised in more than one issue, I give author, shortened title and issue date.

Where I cite several magazine texts by the same writer in the same reference, I give their full name the first time, and subsequently their initials.

I give no author for anonymously written texts (in footnotes and the Bibliography).

Anonymously written texts are at the beginning of each section of the Bibliography; whole issues of magazines are at the end.

When referencing magazines in footnotes, I use the following abbreviations:

<i>Good Housekeeping</i>	<i>GH</i>
<i>Home Notes</i>	<i>HN</i>
<i>The Lady</i>	<i>TL</i>
<i>London Calling</i>	<i>LC</i>
<i>My Weekly</i>	<i>MW</i>
<i>Peg’s Paper</i>	<i>PP</i>
<i>People’s Friend</i>	<i>PF</i>
<i>Reader’s Digest</i>	<i>RD</i>
<i>Woman</i>	<i>W</i>
<i>Woman’s Own</i>	<i>WO</i>
<i>Woman’s Weekly</i>	<i>WW</i>

w/e before a magazine’s issue date denotes week ending. *My Weekly* used a week-ending publication date in 1918 and 1919, but not during subsequent years addressed by this study.

fc and bc stand for front cover and back cover in magazine citations.

I include original sources of condensed articles in *Reader’s Digest* citations.

The spelling of *Woman's Weekly's* cook's name alters from Cecile to Cécile between 1942 and 1943, dates addressed by Chapter Four. I use the latter spelling throughout the main text of this chapter, but cite original spellings in the footnotes.

Introduction

This thesis comprises the first ever depth study of British popular women's magazine *Woman's Weekly*. Its aims are twofold: to map changes and continuities in the domestic culture constructed by the magazine between 1918 and 1958, and to produce a new, specifically literary methodology for exploring periodical form. Sampling magazines issued at ten-year intervals and throughout the Second World War, it addresses how *Woman's Weekly* constructed personal and social identities for its assumed female target readership, gauging the extent to which the magazine reinforced or challenged dominant ideologies. Of particular concern is readers' social class: throughout, strategic comparisons to other magazines help to classify *Woman's Weekly* and the women it targets as distinctively lower middle class. Close and survey readings produce detailed analyses of the magazine's verbal and pictorial discourses, their interactions, meanings and modus operandi; references to other literary works and genres, romance, detective fiction and the middlebrow in particular, situate *Woman's Weekly* within contemporary literary contexts. A diachronic depth study of a single magazine, approached as a literary-aesthetic object, this thesis offers a unique and valuable contribution to the fields of periodical studies and literature.

This Introduction is structured as follows. I introduce *Woman's Weekly* and establish my reasons for surveying the magazine within the period I have chosen; I then outline my thesis' claims to originality, introduce my literary methodology, and discuss some of the challenges presented by my research process. I establish the historical and theoretical frameworks within which I will position my assessment of *Woman's Weekly*'s production of lower-middle-class

domestic culture, and provide, for context, a very brief overview of the magazine's publishing history; finally, I outline the structure of my thesis.

Woman's Weekly, 1918-1958

Woman's Weekly was launched in 1911, as a manual for servantless housewives. Crammed with features addressing housework, cookery, dressmaking, childcare and motherhood, and handicrafts including knitting, crochet, and embroidery, between 1918 and 1958 its interests are primarily domestic. Its target readership also encompasses women in paid employment, whose professional interests are acknowledged by workplace beauty, fashion and conduct advice, and guidance for jobseekers. Costing comparatively little, but preoccupied with helping its readers maintain 'correct' standards of appearance and conduct, the magazine seems to be aimed at a lower-middle-class readership: socially ambitious women from lower-class backgrounds, presumed anxious to establish themselves as middle class by maintaining middle-class standards in their homes and at work. In setting these standards and showing its readers how to preserve them, *Woman's Weekly* contributes to the development of lower-middle-class culture, which increased in prominence during the years surveyed – a period of tremendous upheaval within Britain's class system. As I discuss below, lower-middle-class culture has been accused of being a cheap reproduction of leisure-class culture; issues of *Woman's Weekly* published between 1918 and 1958 dispute this however. My thesis highlights points of ideological distinctiveness in the lower-middle-class culture produced by the magazine for its socially aspirant readers during the forty-year period under review.

My decision to make *Woman's Weekly* the focus of this diachronic depth study was motivated, initially, by personal affection. I first discovered the magazine as a twelve-year-old, when my mother introduced me to the collection of copies from the 1920s to the 1950s she acquired whilst pregnant with me; reading them avidly, I began to develop enthusiasms for popular romance, domestic magazines, and interwar and post-war culture, to which I returned as a student of English literature. *Woman's Weekly* is, however, significant in ways that make it a more objectively appropriate focus for this first-of-its-kind study. To begin with, the title is the third oldest magazine currently being published in Britain, behind *My Weekly* (launched in 1910) and *The Lady* (launched in 1885).¹ It has thus been embedded within British domestic culture for over a century: cited as a sex toy in a song by comedian Victoria Wood² and read below stairs in the opening episode of hit television series *Downton Abbey*,³ it can claim by its evident recognisability to have become something of a popular institution during that time. Secondly, *Woman's Weekly* is a standard-bearer of its genre. Its launch in 1911 pre-empted a boom that took place in domestic women's magazine publishing during the interwar years, when the increasing unavailability of servants forced many middle-class housewives to run their homes without paid help: a domestic magazine for servantless housewives, the publication is a forerunner of titles including *Good Housekeeping*, *Woman's Own*, and *Woman*, which are also still published today. As Ros Ballaster et al note, *Woman's*

¹ Brian Braithwaite, *Women's Magazines: The First 300 Years* (London: Peter Owen, 1995), 26-27, 174.

² "Beat me on the bottom with a *Woman's Weekly*!" (Victoria Wood, "The Ballad of Freda and Barry," *Victoria Wood* [London: BBC Worldwide, 2000], sound recording).

³ *Downton Abbey Series One and Two*, season 1, episode 1, directed by Brian Percival, written by Julian Fellowes (2010; London: Universal Pictures, 2011), DVD.

Weekly helped to establish a “pattern” for subsequent domestic titles;⁴ evidently among the most popular, the title’s weekly circulation remained within the top three throughout the period surveyed.⁵ Finally, instrumental in the development of lower-middle-class culture during a period of class upheaval, *Woman’s Weekly* occupies a position on the frontline of British social change. This, arguably, could be written of all magazines that reflect and help to shape new trends; as Margaret Beetham observes, the magazine is “a place where [cultural] meanings are contested and made”.⁶ Targeting a specific demographic, *Woman’s Weekly* reflects and contributes to social change in accordance with a specific set of attitudes and values. My study of the magazine will therefore offer, in addition to significant insights into the development of a stalwart of the British popular women’s magazine market, a uniquely lower-middle-class feminine perspective on structural change within British middle-class society during the period reviewed.

The time period covered by my study encompasses some significant events in the early to mid-twentieth-century histories of Britain and its female citizens, and a selection of these forms the temporal structure of my thesis. The period begins on 16 November 1918, the date of the first *Woman’s Weekly* magazine to be issued after the Armistice, and finishes at the end of 1958: the end-date is influenced by Randall Stevenson’s observation that the post-war creation of the Welfare State and Suez crisis (in 1956) heralded the emergence of

⁴ Ros Ballaster, et al., *Women’s Worlds: Ideology, Femininity and Women’s Magazines* (London: Macmillan Education, 1991), 83.

⁵ Cynthia L. White, *Women’s Magazines 1693-1968* (London: M. Joseph, 1970), Appendix IV.

⁶ Margaret Beetham, *A Magazine of Her Own? Domesticity and Desire in the Woman’s Magazine, 1800-1914* (London: Routledge, 1996), 5.

“a new kind of life” from the mid-1950s onwards.⁷ Focusing on this period, I examine how *Woman’s Weekly* responds to the aftermath of the First World War, universal suffrage, and the rapid changes within Britain’s class system that took place during the interwar years; how it prepares its readers for, and supports them through, the Second World War; how it helps them to negotiate post-war austerity; and how it encourages them to participate in the culture of consumerism that developed during the mid to late 1950s. Exploring the magazine’s responses to these historical events enables me to assess how this domestic title relates to external politics. Within a changing socio-economic climate, I look for changes to *Woman’s Weekly*’s material quality and shifts in its target readers’ assumed material circumstances; the latter I relate to their changing domestic values. The status of readers working in paid employment is of particular interest throughout. In examining how the magazine profiles its working readers and addresses their assumed concerns, I gauge the extent to which *Woman’s Weekly* supports some historians’ belief that British women who entered the labour market during the First World War were encouraged to return to their homes following the Armistice;⁸ I also explore working readers’ contribution to the Second World War effort, and the status of part-time work in the magazine during the post-war period. Analysing discourses aimed at working readers, I examine how the professional and the domestic relate to one another. Between 1918 and 1958, British women’s public status altered considerably;⁹

⁷ Randall Stevenson, *The British Novel since the Thirties: An Introduction* (London: Batsford, 1986), 118-119.

⁸ E.g. Deidre Beddoe, *Back to Home and Duty: Women between the Wars, 1918-1939* (London: Pandora, 1987), 48; White, *Magazines*, 99.

⁹ Laws were passed allowing women to vote, stand as Members of Parliament, join the professions, inherit property on equal terms as their husbands, divorce their husbands on equal terms, earn the same as men if they were teachers or civil servants, and sit in the

Woman's Weekly's formulation of its readers as citizens of Britain is another point of interest. To the extent that my thesis engages with feminist politics, the end of the 1950s is a logical place to finish: to have tried to incorporate *Woman's Weekly's* engagement with second-wave feminism, triggered by the publication of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963, would have made its scope too ambitious. Signs that *Woman's Weekly* readers are dissatisfied with the domestic roles produced for them by the magazine do, however, surface, and I chart their protests and the responses of the latter, which I relate to the domestic culture criticised by Friedan.

Originality

In presenting a diachronic depth study of *Woman's Weekly*, read as a literary-aesthetic object in literary contexts, my thesis' claims to originality are broadly twofold. Firstly, it addresses the magazine on its own, subjecting its discourses to closer and more prolonged scrutiny than ever before. Other critics have examined *Woman's Weekly* alongside a number of other publications, in order to offer suggestions about the development of the genre as a whole; these include Ros Ballaster et al., Joan Barrell and Brian Braithwaite, Margaret Beetham, Irene Dancyger, Marjorie Ferguson, Ellen McCracken, Jane Waller and Michael Vaughan-Rees, Cynthia White, and Janice Winship.¹⁰ But as Penny Tinkler

House of Lords ("The Women's Timeline," <https://www.mmu.ac.uk/equality-and-diversity/doc/gender-equality-timeline.pdf>; accessed 23 Mar 2015).

¹⁰ Ballaster, et al., *Women's Worlds*; Joan Barrell and Brian Braithwaite, *The Business of Women's Magazines* (London: Kogan Page, 1988); Beetham, *Magazine*; Irene Dancyger, *A World of Women: An Illustrated History of Women's Magazines* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1978); Marjorie Ferguson, *Forever Feminine: Women's Magazines and the Cult of Femininity* (London; Exeter [New Hampshire]: Heinemann, 1983); Ellen McCracken, *Decoding Women's Magazines: From Mademoiselle to Ms* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993); Michael Vaughan-Rees and Jane Waller, *Women in Wartime: The Role of Women's Magazines 1939-1945* (London: Macdonald Optima,

points out, studies examining multiple periodicals risk conflating them and failing to acknowledge that they target different readerships.¹¹ Jill Greenfield and Chris Reid demonstrate the value of Tinkler's contention by pointing out, in their analysis of relations between advertising and editorial content in *Woman's Own* during the 1930s, that the latter targets a less-well-off middle-class readership than that appealed to by *Good Housekeeping*.¹² Focusing almost exclusively on *Woman's Weekly*, using brief references to other publications to provide context, my thesis explores how a single magazine appeals to and constructs the interests and aspirations of readers belonging to an extremely specific segment of middle-class society. In this respect I have been influenced by Susan Sheridan's survey of *The Australian Women's Weekly* (no relation to UK *Woman's Weekly*) between 1946 and 1971, which explores how and why a single magazine formulates the changing roles and status of its readership during a prescribed temporal period.¹³ Sheridan structures her diachronic study thematically, plotting shifts in her subject's formulation of, for instance, "Food and cooking" or "Fashion and beauty" within chapters addressing certain issues; each chapter of her study, therefore, addresses material from the entirety of her period. Since, however, the time period I have chosen for my study encompasses historical events that had a significant impact on British domestic life, I have opted to structure my thesis by year, and to address relevant themes pertaining to the

2006); White, *Magazines*; Janice Winship, *Inside Women's Magazines* (London: Pandora, 1987).

¹¹ Penny Tinkler, *Constructing Girlhood: Popular Magazines for Girls Growing Up in England, 1920-1950* (London: Taylor & Francis, 1995), 5.

¹² Jill Greenfield and Chris Reid, "Women's Magazines and the Commercial Orchestration of Femininity in the 1930s: Evidence from *Woman's Own*," *Media History* Volume 4, Issue 2 (1998): 170.

¹³ Susan Sheridan; with Barbara Baird, Kate Borrett and Lyndall Ryan, *Who was that Woman? The Australian Women's Weekly in the Postwar Years* (Sydney NSW: University of New South Wales Press, 2002).

shifting ideological and cultural climate. My approach also allows me to treat the magazine's discourses fluidly, seeking evidence of how it approaches food and cookery, for instance, in its craft pages and romance fiction.

My thesis' second claim to originality is my literary methodology. Given that complete stories and serials comprise a significant portion of *Woman's Weekly's* contents, and that popular novelists including Annie O. Tibbits, Ruby M. Ayres, Barbara Cartland, and Ethel M. Dell contributed fiction to the magazine during the period reviewed, a literary approach seems highly appropriate. Through examining the archive of a single magazine in greater depth than previously, I make use of texts that have so far received little or no critical scrutiny. Close readings of these texts, which are pictorial as well as verbal, enable me to analyse in detail the mechanisms with which *Woman's Weekly* reflects and constructs its readers' interests and aspirations between 1918 and 1958; survey readings situate individual texts within the broader context of the magazine, highlighting trends and anomalies in doing so. I also situate *Woman's Weekly* within wider literary culture, positioning it alongside works by novelists including Elizabeth Bowen, E. M. Delafield, Daphne Du Maurier, and John Wyndham. Of recurring interest are the publication's relations to the middlebrow, which I discuss in more detail below. I address these relations partly by exploring how *Woman's Weekly's* attitudes echo or challenge those surfacing within the literary middlebrow, and partly by examining the magazine's own status as a middlebrow text – the latter is a focus of Chapter Three, which also explores liberal humanism within the magazine. Finally, drawing on the genre to which the vast majority of *Woman's Weekly's* fiction belongs, I use romance narrative (also discussed below) as a means of

understanding the magazine's structure and functions. In thus approaching *Woman's Weekly* as a literary work, I respond to Patrick Collier's concerns, expressed in 2015, that literature is currently "underrepresented" in periodical studies, and that periodical studies has so far done little to expand the field of literature. According to Collier, periodical research can offer "insight into the print marketplace and reading life": this thesis offers insight into the reading habits and tastes, by the late 1940s, of over one million readers; this is substantially more if we add *Woman's Weekly*'s 'pass-on' readership to those who bought the magazine. Collier also advocates a combination of close and survey ("surface") reading as a tool for examining how meanings interact within periodicals at any given historical moment.¹⁴ A literary survey of a magazine, this depth study of *Woman's Weekly* represents a point of convergence between literary criticism and periodical studies.

My literary approach to surveying *Woman's Weekly* is distinguished by my concern with the magazine's pictorial discourses, which I close-read alongside its verbal texts. In doing so, I gauge how images in the magazine reinforce or challenge the attitudes and values promoted by its written features. In thus exploring how words and images interact to produce meanings within the magazine, I have been influenced by three critics. Exploring how illustrations might guide readers' interpretation of a text, Meyer Schapiro suggests that interactions between words and images are culturally determined:¹⁵ an image, "rich in connotations and symbolized values not evident from the basic text

¹⁴ Patrick Collier, "What Is Modern Periodical Studies?" *The Journal of Modern Periodical Studies* Volume 6, Number 2 (2015): 104-108.

¹⁵ Meyer Schapiro, *Words and Pictures: On the Literal and the Symbolic in the Illustration of a Text* (The Hague: Mouton, 1973), 9-16.

itself’, can influence words’ meaning by drawing them into a network of broader cultural associations.¹⁶ Edward Hodnett makes a similar point, suggesting that book illustrations produce meaning by drawing on pre-existing cultural assumptions.¹⁷ Their arguments resonate strongly with Judith Williamson’s analysis of advertisements, which, she writes, operate within pre-existing systems of collective knowledge, acknowledged through processes of signification in which “reference take[s] the place of description, connotation of denotation”.¹⁸ Thus, for instance, *Woman’s Weekly* readers may identify the model on a shampoo advert as an aristocrat because she is wearing pearls, or associate an advertised cleaning product with efficient domestic service because it is pictured being used by a maid; delivered alongside images of smiling children, comfortable living rooms, or spacious kitchens, the magazine’s domestic advice may associate itself with certain lifestyles, or approaches to domestic management. *Woman’s Weekly*’s pictorial discourses may thus reflect – or seek to cultivate – aspirations and values to which its verbal discourses may not refer explicitly, and in doing so, interact with external social discourses debating the role and status of its readers.

Literary methodology

Appearing weekly in complete stories and serials, puffed on front covers, romance fiction is evidently a major draw of *Woman’s Weekly* during the years reviewed. It is apt that the overwhelming majority of the *Woman’s Weekly* fiction

¹⁶ Schapiro, *Words*, 9-10.

¹⁷ Edward Hodnett, *Image and Text: Studies in the Illustration of English Literature* (London: Scolar Press, 1982), 16.

¹⁸ Judith Williamson, *Decoding Advertisements: Ideology and Meaning in Advertising* (London: Boyars, 1983 [1978]), 19, 100.

reviewed for this study belongs to the romance genre, for romance narrative conventions, I will argue, inform the preoccupations, structure, and functions of the magazine more generally. To begin with, magazine romance fiction has been associated primarily with escapism,¹⁹ and it seems likely that the romances published in *Woman's Weekly* offered its readers respite from everyday domestic demands;²⁰ Chapters One, Four and Five will explore the magazine's romantic provision of escapism during war and its aftermath, when the business of everyday life was subject to greater challenges than usual. To those reading romance to escape from daily life, the less realistic aspects of the genre may appeal. Juggling her writing career with family responsibilities, romance novelist Susan Phillips welcomes the certainty that "everything" in a romance will "turn out all right!" (1992);²¹ to critic Anne Kaler, romances' happy endings engender a comforting 'religious' optimism that virtue will be rewarded – "[romances] have a salvation myth that [...] if I am faithful and try my best, there is a better world somewhere".²² In the light of such statements, I will explore how *Woman's Weekly* romances might offer safe narrative spaces within which readers can address potentially difficult issues, such as the First World War's impact on their menfolk – romance, I will suggest, can, despite its apparent lack

¹⁹ Judy Giles, "Class, Gender and Domestic Consumption in Britain 1920-1950," in *Gender and Consumption: Domestic Cultures and the Commercialisation of Everyday Life*, ed. Emma Casey and Lydia Martens (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 24.

²⁰ Janice Radway, *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature* (London: Verso, 1984) 97; Jonathan Bignell, *Media Semiotics: An Introduction*, 2nd edn. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 63.

²¹ Susan Phillips, "The Romance and the Empowerment of Women," in *Dangerous Men and Adventurous Women: Romance Writers on the Appeal of the Romance*, ed. Jayne Ann Krentz (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992), 54-56.

²² Anne Kaler, "Introduction: Conventions of the Romance Genre," in *Romantic Conventions*, ed. Anne K. Kaler and Rosemary E. Johnson-Kurek (Bowling Green OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1999), 4.

of realism, engage usefully with actuality.²³ Furthermore, I will explore how, by providing traumatic events with happy endings, *Woman's Weekly's* fictional romances might offer compensation for reality. To quote a romance reader interviewed by Janice Radway, romances "usually turn out the way you wish life really was".²⁴

Both romance and *Woman's Weekly* are intimately concerned with the production and fulfilment of desire. To classify as a romance, a story must focus on the developing relationship between two main characters, conclude satisfactorily, that is, with their engagement or marriage, and "provide the reader with [...] vicarious participation in the courtship process".²⁵ Specifically, most *Woman's Weekly* romances qualify as 'Cinderella' romances, which conflate their heroine and reader's marital and class aspirations by incorporating "an individual very like the reader into the society aspired to by both [...] ushered in with a happy rustle of bridal gown and banknote".²⁶ To the extent that *Woman's Weekly* readers identify with *Woman's Weekly* romance heroines, therefore, the latter's social objectives signal those of the former. Within the context of a magazine that, I shall argue, assumes that its readers cease working in paid employment upon marrying, much about their aspirations for upward class mobility could potentially be inferred from the status and occupation of fictional heroes; throughout, I will use the magazine's fiction in part as a social gauge. Moreover, in brokering desirable marriages, romance narratives make desirable

²³ Laura Vivanco, *For Love and Money: The Literary Art of the Harlequin Mills & Boon Romance* (Tirril; Penrith, CA: Humanities – Ebooks.co.uk, 2011), 50-54.

²⁴ Radway, *Romance*, 88.

²⁵ Kristin Ramsdell, *Romance Fiction: A Guide to the Genre* (Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited, 1999), 5.

²⁶ Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), 44.

to readers the values and behaviour with which heroines successfully attract heroes. In this respect, *Woman's Weekly* romances function as conduct fiction, and the values and behaviour they promote will help to map the values underpinning the lower-middle-class domestic culture it constructs. Contradiction and conflict within and between narratives may therefore indicate fissures within this value structure.

Just as the structure of *Woman's Weekly* romance narratives is underpinned by desire followed by its fulfilment, so, too, is the structure of its advertisements and lifestyle features, which claim to transform readers into their desired selves. I will therefore use romance as a model for understanding the form and modus operandi of these discourses, another area of originality in my literary approach. Like its romance stories, many *Woman's Weekly* adverts and lifestyle features invite their readers to identify with a 'heroine' whose desires are assumed similar to their own;²⁷ this heroine, who is often depicted visually, associates the transformative product she is selling with qualities distinctive of the reader's desired self.²⁸ In doing so, the discourse in question constructs what René Girard describes as a "triangle of desire" in which the consumer's ideal self, embodied by a "model" whose looks or lifestyle she aspires to emulate, is made available to herself (the desiring "subject") by the product, a "desired object" believed by her to contain the model's "prestige".²⁹ The models of femininity presented by readers' desired selves will, therefore, contribute to my map of *Woman's Weekly*'s distinctively lower-middle-class domestic values.

²⁷ Gudrun Held, "Magazine Covers – A Multimodal Pretext-Genre," *Folia Linguistica* Volume 39, Issue 1-2 (2005): 179.

²⁸ Williamson, *Advertisements*, 12.

²⁹ René Girard, *Deceit, Desire and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1965), 2.

Woman's Weekly readers' romantic desire to reach a satisfactory conclusion may even shape the process by which they read the magazine, helping them to navigate their way through the multiple texts from which it is constructed. Pictorial as well as verbal, *Woman's Weekly*'s texts constitute what Stuart Sillars describes as a "mixed discourse" whose meaning is produced by interactions between words and images of equal status.³⁰ Each front cover anticipates the desirable contents of that particular issue;³¹ *Woman's Weekly*'s front cover omits page references and the magazine lacks a table of contents or an index, however, so its reader must flip through its pages in order to locate articles or stories she would like to read. Janice Winship frames this preliminary flip-through as a means of building pleasurable anticipation of a magazine's contents, describing how, on opening a magazine for the first time, she scans its "pages for a quick mental fix, mentally checking out the delights for a later and more absorbing read".³² Winship's description of her initial flip-through draws attention to the visual appeal of magazines' multi-media format; as *Woman's Weekly*'s hypothetical reader flips, her eye may be caught by drawings, photographs, or typography, which, signposting the magazine's texts, may help her to decide which to omit and which to read, and the order in which she reads them. Adverts are perhaps "most likely" to grab her attention during this initial flip-through, owing to their "size [...] and simplicity"³³ – presumably the purpose of their catchy headlines and illustrations. Perhaps a *Woman's Weekly* reader is flipping through the magazine to find the knitting pattern advertised on

³⁰ Stuart Sillars, *Visualisation in Popular Fiction, 1860-1960: Graphic Narratives, Fictional Images* (London: Routledge, 1995), 75-90.

³¹ Held, "Covers," 176-177.

³² Winship, *Inside*, 4.

³³ Bignell, *Semiotics*, 63.

its front cover. It is located near the middle, so she must flip past several features and adverts in order to find it. As she flips, her eye is caught by a romance story illustration, of an intense-looking exchange between a heroine and hero. Her curiosity piqued, she temporarily suspends her search for the pattern in order to read the opening of this romance; she discovers, as she reaches the end of its second page, that this intriguing exchange must take place later in the narrative, and she flips forward to find the next part of the story, printed several pages further on, after some film reviews and this week's dressmaking feature. Thus, "the placing of the image [...] before the episode is described [...] makes [the reader] want to read on"³⁴ – much like *Woman's Weekly's* front cover, in fact. Hooked, this reader abandons her search for the pattern and settles down to finish the story. Her desire to reach its conclusion, which is printed towards the end of the magazine, causes her to flip beyond the knitting pattern she was looking for, the *denouement* of a serial, the start of another serial, a childcare advice column, knitting patterns, the cookery page, hints on cleaning gloves, advertisements... Dismantled and dispersed throughout issues of *Woman's Weekly*, romance narratives exploit their readers' desire for conclusiveness to ensure that they are exposed to the rest of the magazine's contents.

Margaret Beetham argues that the process of flipping through a magazine, reading some articles, missing others, and determining the order in which they are read, empowers the reader, who is "to a unique degree construct[ing] [her] own text from the printed version".³⁵ I agree with Beetham, but would add that, since the discourses from which a reader constructs her

³⁴ Sillars, *Visualisation*, 86.

³⁵ Beetham, *Magazine*, 12-13.

personalised text are restricted to those appearing in a particular publication, her choice is, ultimately, governed by editorial agenda. Beetham's contention does, however, highlight the possibility that the texts comprising a single magazine may conflict with or contradict one another. Discursive conflict and contradiction are identified as key distinctions of periodicals by Mark Turner who, in his survey of Victorian magazines, defines the latter as plural texts using Mikhail Bakhtin's "notion of social heteroglossia" or blend of different voices within a language.³⁶ The identification and exploration of points of ideological contradiction and conflict within *Woman's Weekly*, and the implications of these for my understanding of the magazine, comprise a crucial element of this thesis.

Romance narrative structure also pilots *Woman's Weekly's* reader through multiple issues of the magazine, hooking her into regular readership by ensuring that she buys next week's issue, and the week after, and the week after that. Serialised stories exploit her desire for narrative closure: she may have just completed the final episode of one serial, but she is eager to discover what happens next in another; beginning before the latter reaches its conclusion, a third guarantees her loyalty for the next few months, within which time a fourth has begun, and so on. Drawing on techniques of serialisation, *Woman's Weekly's* lifestyle discourses also use delayed gratification to hook readers. Advice columnists invite them to submit queries that may be answered in future issues, competition results are published after a delay of weeks, and knitting and dressmaking pages anticipate the following week's project alongside instructions for making a complete garment. The reader's desire to make and wear the

³⁶ Mark Turner, *Trollope and the Magazines: Gendered Issues in Mid-Victorian Britain* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), 231.

anticipated garment may undermine her satisfaction with that which she has just completed, thus delaying her transformation into her ideal self; upon completing one project, she is already looking forward to finishing her next, deferring her ideal self still further. And so on. Judith Williamson argues that transformative lifestyle discourses are a principal attraction of women's magazines, which are read for self-improvement, and that magazines' repetition of subject matter reveals (or ensures) that these transformations are never complete.³⁷ Williamson attributes this apparently calculated failure by magazines' lifestyle discourses to fulfil their transformative promises to magazine producers' desire to establish regular readerships: weekly publications hook readers by working their aspirations into narratives of delayed gratification that place transformation just beyond their reach.³⁸ In any case, *Woman's Weekly's* continually evolving social conditions of production ensure that the publication must continually reshape its readers' ideal selves and their means of achieving them, in accordance with evolving conventions. Thus, the romance narrative underpinning *Woman's Weekly's* transformative lifestyle discourses resembles that of a soap opera: an ongoing narrative of delayed gratification containing enough subsidiary conclusions (such as complete stories, craft projects) to partially satisfy readers' desire for conclusiveness, and retaining their long-term loyalty by implying that their ultimate goal of class promotion through self-improvement is "just around the corner".³⁹ Over a century later, *Woman's Weekly's* reader remains a work in progress.

³⁷ Judith Williamson, *Consuming Passions* (London and New York: Marion Boyars, 1988 [1986]), 55-56.

³⁸ Williamson, *Consuming*, 55-56.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 56.

Challenges

My experience of researching *Woman's Weekly* in the British Library's magazine archive echoes Collier's assertion that one of the principal challenges encountered by periodical scholars is "working with [...] an unmanageable plenitude of texts".⁴⁰ Covering a period of almost three centuries, White addresses this challenge by sampling magazines that are "representative" of their type;⁴¹ Beetham takes a similar approach, sampling titles that are "representative or significant" from just over 100 years of publications.⁴² Addressing a much smaller time period, Sheridan surveys all issues of *The Australian Women's Weekly* published in one year, every five years, across a span of twenty-five years.⁴³ Following her example, I map continuity and change in *Woman's Weekly* by taking ten-yearly soundings across the forty-year period, with the addition of the Second World War; I am reading the first issue published each month cover-to-cover, and finding further features of interest by flipping through the rest, a reading process similar to that performed by Winship. A combination of in-depth and superficial readings seems an appropriate means of surveying a publication that is picked up and put down, read and reread. The process of flipping through hundreds of magazines has enabled me to assess change and continuity in *Woman's Weekly* quantitatively, counting, for instance, the number of adverts for

⁴⁰ Collier, "Periodical Studies?" 107.

⁴¹ White, *Magazines*, 18.

⁴² Beetham, *Magazine*, 5.

⁴³ Sheridan, *Who*, 8.

a certain product or type of product appearing during a given year. This process will generate productive comparisons between the magazine and other titles, and point to absences within the former that are as indicative of its lower-middle-class status as what is present.

In order to make the plenitude of material more manageable, I leave some texts and topics for further study. I do not read serialised fiction: most *Woman's Weekly* serials are novel-length and, serialised over many months, would take longer to read than the time allotted to this project allowed. I do however refer to serial titles, taglines, themes, and illustrations – my flip-through approach to reading quickly reveals points of relevance. Additionally, whilst I do address motherhood, and include *Woman's Weekly's* childrearing discourses in my discussion of its readers' domestic roles, I do not analyse the magazine's approaches to childrearing in depth. Preliminary investigations suggest that its sentimentality towards toddlers and babies in particular may be distinctively lower middle class, distinguishing *Woman's Weekly's* approach to motherhood from that aspired to by middle-middle-class mothers in novels by E. M. Delafield, whose 'hands-off' childrearing methods seem to have been influenced by Frederick Truby King and John B. Watson.⁴⁴ Owing to pressures of time and space, however, I have elected to save detailed discussion of childrearing in

⁴⁴ Truby King believed that too much handling and excitement during a child's first year would make it nervous and irritable in later life (*Feeding and Care of Baby* [London: Macmillan & Co., 1913], 102-104); Watson encouraged mothers and nurses to distance themselves from their children, who would consequently learn problem-solving skills (Christina Hardyment, *Dream Babies: Child Care from Locke to Spock* [London: Jonathan Cape, 1983], 170-178). "Tell her that Robin – whom I refer to in a detached way as 'the boy' so that she shan't think I am getting foolish about him" writes Delafield's Provincial Lady, recalling an exchange with local aristocrat Lady Boxe – evidently the Provincial Lady believes her approach to parenting to be an indicator of her status (E. M. Delafield, *Diary of a Provincial Lady*, in *The Diary of a Provincial Lady* by E. M. Delafield [London: Virago Press Ltd, 1993 [1930]], 3).

Woman's Weekly, clearly a profitable topic, for a future project. Likewise, I decided not to address *Woman's Weekly's* engagement with British colonialism in this study. By informing readers living in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Rhodesia, and South Africa where to buy issues and where to source dressmaking materials, *Woman's Weekly* assumes a colonial readership; again, however, exploration of the magazine's lower-middle-class domestic culture within British colonial contexts falls beyond the scope of this project, and has been saved for future research.

A further challenge I have faced has been gleaning information about *Woman's Weekly's* producers. Although the magazine's current publishing director and editor, Sandy Gale and Diane Kenwood, granted me access to the magazine's archive – a privilege, since generally it is reserved for staff use only – this archive contains only copies of the magazine, and no information at all about the individuals who wrote, illustrated, edited, and published it during the years surveyed. Restructuring and changes of ownership presumably account for this absence;⁴⁵ nevertheless, it leaves me with intriguing and, pending further revelations, frustratingly unanswerable questions. With the exception of gardening and holiday experts Fanny Bennett and Barbara Mole, celebrity contributors such as composer and conductor Herman Darewski, and romance novelist Deidre Robbins, the vast majority of the magazine's lifestyle columnists are unidentified. Most – although by no means all, especially during 1918 and 1919, when it was relatively common for *Woman's Weekly* stories to be published anonymously – fiction writers are identified however, enabling readers to relate more personally to their work and perhaps to develop their own literary

⁴⁵ Barrell and Braithwaite, *Business*, 210.

preferences. Some writers, such as Ayres, Dell, Tibbits, and Edith Arundel, were popular novelists whose recognisable names, often appearing on front covers of the magazine, were presumably intended to attract fans of their work; all fiction writers probably hoped to profit from exposure in the magazine, which, in effect, advertised their work.⁴⁶ Searches of online archives (my first port of call for researching unfamiliar magazine writers⁴⁷) have produced some noteworthy connections: Rene M. Worley, whose complete story “What Shall We Do With Mother?” appeared in *Woman’s Weekly* on 3 September 1938,⁴⁸ was playwright Alan Ayckbourn’s mother, and complete story “The Remarkable Love Affair”⁴⁹ was probably written by Elisabeth Beresford, creator of popular children’s television characters the Wombles.⁵⁰ Most exciting of all was finding out that Phinella the Famous Lady Detective, whose exploits are discussed in Chapter One, was created by Emmy Allingham, mother of detective novelist Margery. Discoveries such as these have made the lack of information about *Woman’s Weekly*’s lifestyle columnists in particular more frustrating; sadly, the identities of The Man Who Sees, Cecile, The London Girl and Mrs Marryat remain mysteries during the period surveyed. Quite possibly their weekly columns were

⁴⁶ Laurel Brake, “Writing, Cultural Production, and the Periodical Press in the Nineteenth Century,” in *Writing and Victorianism*, ed. J. B. Bullen (London: Longman, 1997), 56.

⁴⁷ Enabling the cross-referencing of authors, stories, and the magazines in which they were published, *The FictionMags Index*, edited by William G. Contento and Phil Stevenson-Payne, is one useful online resource:

<http://www.philsp.com/homeville/fmi/0start.htm#TOC> (accessed 18 Jun 2017).

⁴⁸ Rene M. Worley, “What Shall We Do With Mother?” *WW* 3 Sept 1938, 423-427, 450, 454-455.

⁴⁹ Elisabeth Beresford, “The Remarkable Love Affair,” *WW* 1 Mar 1958, 18-22, 58-59.

⁵⁰ The Wombles’ creator spells Elizabeth with a z; but as she earned her living writing “romantic stories for women’s magazines” during the early part of a career in journalism, it seems probable that she is the Elisabeth Beresford whose stories appear in *Woman’s Weekly* (BBC News, “Wombles’ creator Elizabeth Beresford dies,” www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-12079067 [accessed 21 Feb 2018]).

produced by several writers, and their singular personas were intended to maintain continuity and friendly, ‘personal’ relations between *Woman’s Weekly* and its readers. To avoid assumptions about the magazine’s anonymous contributors, when a feature or story is published anonymously I refer to its writer as ‘they’.

Like *Woman’s Weekly*’s producers, the individuals who bought and read the magazine are largely absent from this survey. To the extent that their letters are printed in the magazine, they also contribute to its production; correspondence from teenagers, workers, housewives, grandmothers, and even men suggest that its reception was broad. When I cite these letters I refer to their writers by name, to acknowledge their voices within the heteroglossia. Without reader-response data there is, however, no way of quantifying the extent to which *Woman’s Weekly* readers agreed with the magazine’s ideologies, or the extent to which they adopted its practices and values in their own lives. As Winship observes, magazine readers exercise choice over the degree of a publication’s influence: “it is one thing to describe the construction of femininity in magazines, another to suggest that readers identified or behaved in ways advocated”.⁵¹ Where other discourses are available against which readers can criticise or reflect on the ideologies sold to them by a particular magazine, she argues, they have the wherewithal to resist these ideologies.⁵² Judith Fetterley makes a similar point by distinguishing “resisting” from “assenting” readers,⁵³ although, since both types of reader buy a publication, both effectively legitimise

⁵¹ Janice Winship, “The Impossibility of *Best*,” in *Come On Down?: Popular Media Culture in Post-war Britain*, ed. Dominic Strinati and Stephen Wagg (London: Routledge, 1992), 89.

⁵² Winship, “*Best*,” 90-92.

⁵³ Judith Fetterley, *The Resisting Reader: A Feminist Approach to American Fiction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), xxii.

its ideologies by enabling its continued production. Furthermore, it is possible to assent to and resist different discourses in the same magazine. Throughout, I will profile the magazine's target readership, mapping changes and consistencies in its makeup. Again, to acknowledge that *Woman's Weekly*, although aimed at women, could have been used by people of all genders, where the gender of the assumed reader or readers is not given I refer to them as 'they'.

Middle-class culture and anxieties, 1918-1958: an overview

Having introduced my thesis, outlined my methodology, and discussed some of the challenges presented by researching *Woman's Weekly*, I will now establish the historical and theoretical frameworks within which I examine lower-middle-class culture in the magazine. Between 1918 and 1938, the British class system underwent cataclysmic changes. Financially poleaxed by high post-war taxation and mourning its male heirs' battlefield deaths, the interwar aristocracy was rapidly conceding social, political, and economic primacy to the ascendant middle classes, whose own composition was altering, supplemented from above by impoverished members of the upper classes (who lost status along with income) and bolstered from beneath by a growing wave of white-collar workers.⁵⁴ The latter comprised the lower middle classes: council school teachers, technicians, shop or sales managers, commercial travellers and clerks who, enjoying salaried rather than waged incomes, stability of employment, prospects of promotion, the means to save, and, often, pensions, shared many of the established middle classes' attitudes and aspirations, despite their closer

⁵⁴ Nicola Humble, *The Feminine Middlebrow Novel, 1920s to 1950s: Class, Domesticity, and Bohemianism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 60-61.

economic proximity to the working classes.⁵⁵ Ambitious and upwardly mobile, by the end of the 1930s many sought to confirm their middle-class status by buying or at least renting smart modern houses in fast-expanding suburbia, boasting electricity, hot water, an indoor toilet, and brighter rooms and larger gardens than those belonging to the narrow, poky terraced homes they occupied before 1914.⁵⁶ Fulltime housewives, encumbered by fewer children but mostly unable to afford paid domestic help, aimed to maintain middle-class domestic standards in these new homes, drawing practical advice from an expanding range of domestic magazines aimed at the suburban market.⁵⁷ *Woman's Weekly* is one such publication; evidently popular, by 1936 it claimed a circulation of over 500,000.⁵⁸

The turmoil of rapid upward and downward class mobility caused the expanding, diversifying interwar middle classes to develop acute status anxiety. Alison Light notes that, as plummeting upper-class fortunes severed class from economic status, occupational diversification dissolved professional distinctions and middle-class lifestyles were altered by social and technological change.⁵⁹ Acquiring leisure-class culture as proof of their social ascendancy, the upper middle classes felt threatened by the lower middle classes, blaming them for

⁵⁵ Alan Jackson, *The Middle Classes 1900-1950* (Melksham: Redwood Press Ltd, 1991), 12-13; Ross McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures: England 1918-1951* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 44-45.

⁵⁶ Jackson, *Middle Classes*, 49; McKibbin, *Classes*, 73-74.

⁵⁷ Humble, *Middlebrow*, 54.

⁵⁸ Howard Cox and Simon Mowatt, *Revolutions from Grub Street: A History of Magazine Publishing in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 63.

⁵⁹ Alison Light, *Forever England: Femininity, Literature and Conservatism Between the Wars* (London: Routledge, 1991), 91, 97-98. The growth of the business and finance, service and entertainment sectors destabilised the “[o]lder distinctions between gentry, clergy and the professions” (Light, *England*, 97-98); social and technological changes included greater geographical mobility, a rise in commuting, a decline in domestic service, single women’s entry into the paid workforce, and the growth of motorised and public transport (ibid., 98).

destabilising a class system based on inherited privilege by designating themselves ‘middle class’ through occupation and income; the upper middle classes feared that lower-middle-class culture would subsume their own.⁶⁰ The lower middle classes’ increasing prominence was not feared universally, however. Noting during 1941 that their knowledge and tastes had been shaped by free secondary education and mass culture, both of which appeared to be erasing some of the cultural distinctions separating the middle from the working classes, George Orwell hailed these “people of indeterminate social class” as representatives of a future classless society:

The place to look for the germs of the future England is in light-industry areas and along arterial roads. [...] In those vast new wildernesses of glass and brick the sharp distinctions of the older kind of town [...] no longer exist. There are wide gradations of income, but it is the same kind of life that is being lived at different levels, in labour-saving flats or council houses.⁶¹

Chapter Two will explore how the lower middle classes’ concurrent realisation of professional and class promotion is enacted in 1928 *Woman’s Weekly* fiction, by self-made romance heroes whose meritocratic upward mobility is also indicative of the physical, psychological, and economic recovery of lower-middle-class masculinity following the First World War.

Class indeterminacy intensified status anxiety amongst members of the interwar middle classes, who, confronting radical redefinitions of what ‘being middle class’ meant, fought desperately to preserve their own status. Alison

⁶⁰ Humble, *Middlebrow*, 70-71.

⁶¹ George Orwell, “England Your England,” *The Lion and the Unicorn: Socialism and the English Genius* (London: Martin Secker & Warburg Ltd, 2001 [1941]), 53-54.

Light describes the interwar middle classes as “a profoundly restless and heterodox grouping” characterised by acute awareness of difference;⁶² Raphael Samuel defines the “Middle Class between the Wars” as “a society of orders each with its own exclusion rituals and status ideology”.⁶³ The middle classes’ use of difference to confirm their own status whilst ruling out their peers resulted in what Evelyn Waugh describes as an entirely relational middle-class hierarchy on which individuals positioned themselves using criteria chosen to confirm their own superiority: “*everyone* (everyone, that is to say, who comes to the front door) *thinks he is a gentleman* [...] *everyone draws the line of demarcation immediately below his own heels*”.⁶⁴ Waugh’s scheme of classification functioning primarily as self-elevation resembles that constructed by Philip Furbank, who describes the process as a social transaction in which class status is designated according to the relative class positions of the classifying and classified individuals as perceived by the former – “[social classification is] a judgement and a speculation, and these will inevitably be coloured by who is doing the judging and speculating and with what motive”.⁶⁵ Chief amongst the interwar lower middle classes’ status anxieties was the need to distinguish themselves from the working classes, whose incomes, although waged rather than salaried, were similar in size to their own.⁶⁶ Addressing *Woman’s Weekly* during the interwar period, Chapters One, Two, and Three will argue that the

⁶² Light, *England*, 98, 12.

⁶³ Raphael Samuel, “The Middle Class Between the Wars,” *New Socialist* Jan/Feb 1983: 30.

⁶⁴ Evelyn Waugh, “An Open Letter,” in *Noblesse Oblige: An Enquiry into the Identifiable Characteristics of the English Aristocracy*, ed. Alan S. C. Ross and Nancy Mitford (London: Hamish Hamilton Ltd, 1973), 74.

⁶⁵ Philip N. Furbank, *Unholy Pleasure, or, The Idea of Social Class* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 13.

⁶⁶ McKibben, *Classes and Cultures*, 45.

magazine established criteria with which its lower-middle-class readers might make this distinction; Chapters Four, Five, and Six will suggest that ‘not being working class’ remained key to readers’ understandings of themselves as middle class during and after the Second World War. The relational aspect of *Woman’s Weekly*’s lower-middle-class status will be reflected in comparisons to other domestic publications, including *My Weekly*, *Peg’s Paper*, and *Good Housekeeping*, against which *Woman’s Weekly* emerges as distinctively lower middle class. By suggesting that *Woman’s Weekly* and these rivals on the newsstand target readers from different sections of the middle classes, these comparisons support Tinkler’s claim that survey studies of magazines risk conflating their readerships, thereby perhaps failing to acknowledge sufficiently the divided, stratified nature of middle-class social culture.

The Second World War (1939-1945) put the interwar middle classes’ scrupulously preserved internal class divisions under considerable strain. Whether the experience of fighting a “common enemy” produced a “new sense of social unity” between the classes, or whether wartime social cohesion was a myth perpetuated by morale-boosting propaganda,⁶⁷ the conditions of the conflict “accelerated social mixing to an unprecedented degree”.⁶⁸ Chapter Four will argue that wartime *Woman’s Weekly* aims to distance its readers from working-class culture within this mixed social climate. Following the war, a drop in middle-class wages and living standards caused many salary earners to fear a

⁶⁷ Brad Beaven, *Leisure, Citizenship and Working-Class Men in Britain, 1850-1945* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 212-213.

⁶⁸ The establishment of army and air force bases, which were used by American and commonwealth as well as British service personnel, the evacuation of families from cities to the countryside, weekly dances and entertainments, and air raid shelters brought the different social classes into closer proximity with one another (Jackson, *Middle Classes*, 21-22, 327).

drop in class status;⁶⁹ at the same time, a rise in working class prosperity within a fledgling consumerist society prompted many working-class families to seek more distinctively middle-class lifestyles, exacerbating lower-middle-class status anxiety in particular.⁷⁰ Finally, servant keeping, which had been in decline throughout the interwar years owing to the unpopularity of domestic service amongst working-class women especially, ceased to become a touchstone of middle-class status.⁷¹ Alan Jackson argues that, as a result, post-war “advertising and literature of home-making [...] assume[d] a more classless character”⁷² – Chapters Five and Six examine his argument in the light of comparisons between *Woman’s Weekly* and *Good Housekeeping*. A major contention of this thesis is that *Woman’s Weekly*, and the domestic magazines to which it is compared, produce and maintain middle-class distinctions, constructing and reinforcing the stratified, relational middle-class hierarchy posited by Light, Samuel, Waugh, and Furbank.

Constantly classifying, constantly classified, the interwar middle classes participated in what Light describes as a “game of assessment and judgement” of “almost manic proportions”.⁷³ Keeping up appearances was paramount: with class status becoming loosened from occupation, upbringing, education, and personal appearance, social conduct and customs became the criteria by which individuals classified themselves at their peers’ expense. Conduct and etiquette columns in interwar *Woman’s Weekly* indicate a readership assumed anxious to present a middle-class behavioural front; similar features in post-war magazines

⁶⁹ Humble, *Middlebrow*, 73-74.

⁷⁰ Jackson, *Middle Classes*, 326-327; McKibbin, *Classes*, 119.

⁷¹ Jackson, *Middle Classes*, 326.

⁷² Ibid., 326.

⁷³ Light, *England*, 97.

suggest that their anxiety remains after the conflict. Designating “theatrical” class status a form of social performance, Light assumes that class distinctions are material and thus potentially acquirable;⁷⁴ selling its readers a share in the leisure-class culture being acquired by the ascendant middle classes as proof that they are successfully usurping upper-class primacy, *Woman’s Weekly* seems to share her assumption. Light’s non-essentialist model of status-as-performance resembles the model of racial passing constructed by Samira Kawash, who replaces an essence/appearance dichotomy with essence *as* appearance to suggest that ‘original’ as well as copied identities are forms of passing.⁷⁵ Transferred to class identity, Kawash’s model designates ‘being middle class’ as acquired rather than innate: addressed as “you” by *Woman’s Weekly*’s conduct columns and advertisements, the magazine’s reader learns to pass as leisure class by observing others and “translating [their] status and criteria to [herself]”.⁷⁶ Erasing the distinction between passing and being, Kawash dismantles systems of inherited privilege. To the extent, therefore, that *Woman’s Weekly* teaches its readers to be leisure class – traditionally an inherited status – it subverts the class structure it pertains to uphold.

Whether or not leisure-class status is acquirable and whether or not *Woman’s Weekly* is, in fact, claiming that the leisure-class distinctions it sells are indeed leisure-class status signifiers are questions addressed by this thesis.

Offering arguments that counter those made by Light and Kawash, Pierre Bourdieu and Alan Ross suggest that acquirable distinctions signify attitudes and

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Samira Kawash, “(Passing for) Black Passing for White,” in *Passing and the Fictions of Identity*, ed. Elaine K. Ginsberg (Durham, NC; London: Duke University Press, 1996), 59-74.

⁷⁶ Kawash, “Passing,” 64.

values that are less easily obtainable but nonetheless essential to status, and that consequently class cannot be acquired. Bourdieu figures culture as a form of unequally distributed capital, exchangeable for prestige and power, which structures society by ranking its possessors.⁷⁷ Whilst material or “objectified” cultural capital can be acquired instantly, habitual attitudes and values, or “embodied” cultural capital, are accumulated only during upbringing and education: although not hereditary in the genetic sense, they are transmitted from parent to child during the formative socialisation period.⁷⁸ Without embodied cultural capital, objectified cultural capital can be possessed only “materially” (as an object) rather than “symbolically” (as a status signifier): effectively, whilst leisure-class status is not biologically innate, it cannot be acquired simply by learning how to dress and behave like a lady. Ross also believes that non-leisure-class (“non-U”) individuals are barred from leisure-class (“U”) status by their upbringing and education, arguing that they will betray their origins in their speech, a form of embodied cultural capital: “one single pronunciation, word, or phrase will suffice to brand an apparent U-speaker as originally non-U (for U-speakers themselves never make ‘mistakes’).”⁷⁹ His claim that speech will give away the origins of a non-U speaker keeping up U appearances in all other respects is echoed in Bourdieu’s assertion that cultural capital “always remains marked by its earliest conditions of acquisition which [...] help to determine its

⁷⁷ Pierre Bourdieu, “Forms of Capital,” in *Cultural Theory: An Anthology*, ed. Timothy Kaposy and Imre Szeman, trans. Richard Nice (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011 [1986]), 81-93.

⁷⁸ Bourdieu, “Forms,” 82-85.

⁷⁹ Alan S. C. Ross, “U and non-U – An Essay in Sociological Linguistics,” in *Noblesse Oblige: An Enquiry into the Identifiable Characteristics of the English Aristocracy*, ed. Alan S. C. Ross and Nancy Mitford (London: Hamish Hamilton Ltd, 1973), 33.

distinctive value”.⁸⁰ If embodied lower-middle-class cultural capital degrades objectified leisure-class cultural capital, then leisure-class status is beyond lower-middle-class *Woman’s Weekly* readers’ reach.

A supposition, similar to that made by Bourdieu and Ross, that leisure-class cultural capital is degraded by lower-middle-class consumption surfaces in mock-sociological treatise *The Suburbans* (1905) by Thomas Crosland, who states that the turn-of-the-twentieth-century suburban lower middle classes are unable to afford genuine leisure-class culture and would be unable to recognise it if they could. These distinctions are embodied by the clownish “Male Suburban” who, despite his ill-fitting coat, trousers, and boots, “believes himself to be the [...] model of form” having been convinced by his tailor that he is purchasing “fashionable article[s] on [...] economical terms”; “were [The Male Suburban] a little richer he would go boldly into Bond Street and purchase himself attire of the radiantest [*sic*]” but these “garments would be vulgar, and the effect of them disconcerting”.⁸¹ Aware that he will be classified by his taste in clothing but prevented by his breeding from distinguishing between a genuine leisure-class costume and a cheap, nasty reproduction,⁸² Crosland’s subject is a victim of what Bourdieu calls “cultural allodoxia [...] the mistaken identifications and recognitions which betray the gap between acknowledgement and knowledge” of the culture to which he aspires.⁸³ This gap, manifest in the lower middle classes’ pretensions to familiarity with “legitimate” (‘high’) culture they do not actually possess in a bid to claim cultural legitimacy, is purportedly lessened by

⁸⁰ Bourdieu, “Forms,” 84.

⁸¹ Thomas Crosland, *The Suburbans* (London: John Lang, 1905), 38-40.

⁸² Crosland, *Suburbans*, 40, 60-62.

⁸³ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Trans. Richard Nice (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986 [1979]), 321.

middlebrow cultural works, defined by Bourdieu as accessible, bogus versions of high cultural forms consumed by the lower middle classes in imitation of their class superiors.⁸⁴ Defining middlebrow culture, Bourdieu elaborates on his claim that leisure-class culture loses its symbolic value through contact with the lower middle classes, arguing that the cultural works they consume become middlebrow by virtue of their appeal to lower-middle-class tastes.⁸⁵ It is thus impossible for any cultural work consumed by the lower middle classes to be anything other than middlebrow, and thus lower-middle-class consumers' class aspirations are unattainable: "legitimate culture is not made for [them] [...] [they] are not made for it".⁸⁶

Lower-middle-class culture has thus been associated with misguided social pretension and cultural inauthenticity, and a version of the middlebrow steeped in both. The lower middle classes, Bourdieu, Ross, and Crosland suggest, are destined to remain so: upward class mobility is impossible, since they lack the breeding and background necessary to recognise leisure-class culture, and in any case, any cultural work they consume loses all claims it might have had to high status precisely through its appeal to them. This defeatist assessment of lower-middle-class culture is something my thesis will challenge. The domestic culture produced by *Woman's Weekly*, it will argue, is not merely a cheap, easily accessible, bogus version of a leisure-class culture its readers aspire towards but cannot afford; the magazine does peddle budget reproductions of leisure-class cultural distinctions, I will suggest, but the inability of both it and its target readers to recognise that these are inauthentic is questionable, and

⁸⁴ Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 318-319, 321.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 327-328.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 328.

besides, the extent to which the latter even aspire towards leisured lifestyles is open to debate. In thus using *Woman's Weekly* magazines issued between 1918 and 1958 to challenge the defeatist model of lower-middle-class culture constructed by Bourdieu, Ross, and Crosland, I echo Humble, who argues that middlebrow fiction produced during the same period is more knowing about class and the highbrow than Bourdieu's sense of abject imitation implies. Middlebrow fiction, she suggests, works to produce and validate its own set of class values whilst acknowledging that others exist; moreover, it critiques, rather than seeks unquestioningly to reproduce, highbrow intellectualism. Consciously positioning itself in terms of class and aesthetic status, Humble's version of the middlebrow is therefore not simply a bogus reproduction of the highbrow for readers assumed incapable of recognising the real thing.⁸⁷ It is a similar sense of social and cultural self-awareness that my thesis will highlight in arguing that, between 1918 and 1958, *Woman's Weekly* constructs and validates an ideologically distinctive lower-middle-class domestic culture for its socially ambitious target readership.

A brief publishing history of *Woman's Weekly*

Throughout the period surveyed by this thesis *Woman's Weekly* was produced by the Amalgamated Press, established in 1900 by brothers Alfred and Harold Harmsworth to oversee their magazine publishing interests. From their lavish offices in Carmelite House, situated on London's Embankment, the Harmsworths oversaw a growing empire of weekly domestic titles aimed at broadly lower-class female readerships, which, by 1914, included *Forget-Me-Not*, *Home Chat*,

⁸⁷ Humble, *Middlebrow*, 21-22.

Home Fashions, the *Best Way* series, and *Woman's World*, and, by the late 1920s, *Women's Pictorial*.⁸⁸ By the mid-interwar period *Woman's Weekly*, along with *Home Chat*, *Woman's World*, and *Women's Pictorial*, would become a mainstay of the Amalgamated Press, which commended all four publications in its 1928 Annual General Meeting for continuing to provide a major source of revenue.⁸⁹ Alfred, who became Lord Northcliffe in 1905, also owned mass-circulation newspapers *The Times* and the *Daily Mail*;⁹⁰ following his death in 1922, Harold, by now Lord Rothermere, inherited his publishing interests.⁹¹ In 1958 the Amalgamated Press was acquired by Mirror Newspapers and became Fleetway Publications, which, in 1962, was subsumed into "corporate entity" IPC Media.⁹² In 2001, IPC was bought by Warner and renamed Time Inc. UK.⁹³ Today, *Woman's Weekly* is run from the Blue Fin Building in Southwark, less than a mile away from the Harmsworths' original offices on the north side of the Thames. A soaring modern edifice housing a shopping arcade, health club, and winter garden, as well as offices, the Blue Fin (which is named after the two thousand aluminium fins that shade its glass-fronted interior) is every bit as lavish as Carmelite House was a century previously. Produced just minutes' walk from the Tate Modern and the South Bank, *Woman's Weekly* can claim close proximity, geographically at least, to a centre of British culture; a bus or tube

⁸⁸ Cox and Mowatt, *Revolutions*, 48, 63.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 63.

⁹⁰ Philip J. Waller, *Writers, Readers, and Reputations: Literary Life in Britain, 1800-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 455.

⁹¹ D. George Boyce, "Harmsworth, Harold Sidney, first Viscount Rothermere," Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, ed. H.C. G. Harrison and Brian Matthew (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 347.

⁹² Cox and Mowatt, *Revolutions*, 83-85, 86-90.

⁹³ Eli M. Noam and the International Media Concentration Collaboration, *Who Owns the World's Media? Media Concentration and Ownership around the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 1119.

ride away from London's West End shopping districts, the magazine is cheek by jowl with consumerism, to which culture it belongs.

Thesis structure

Scrutinising magazines issued between November 1918 and November 1919, Chapter One examines *Woman's Weekly* during the year immediately following the Armistice that ended the First World War, exploring its responses to the war's impact on British masculinity and the status of working women in a civilian society to which demobilised servicemen were returning. A discussion of how it relates its socially ambitious readers to leisure-class culture establishes some lower-middle-class distinctions to which later chapters will return.

Chapter Two, which addresses magazines produced during 1928, examines *Woman's Weekly*'s responses to universal suffrage, achieved during that year, and explores how it encourages its readers to use knowledge of leisure-class travel and etiquette to distinguish themselves as middle class. Checking up on the continuing recovery of war-damaged masculinity it probes the social attractiveness of young and upwardly mobile romance heroes, and re-examines the status of leisure in its female readers' lives before introducing the possibility that not all readers are happy with the domestic identities produced for them by the magazine.

Surveying magazines issued between September 1938 and September 1939, Chapter Three examines *Woman's Weekly*'s responses and contributions to Britain's preparations for the Second World War. The magazine's reluctance to

mention the war, and its oblique reassurances that British men and women are once again ready to serve their country, are explored. The second half of the chapter looks in detail at The Man Who Sees' liberal humanist cultural education of its readers, and his thoughts on their duties as citizens during the coming conflict.

Chapter Four examines magazines issued between September 1939 and July 1945: the Second World War. *Woman's Weekly* throws itself into Britain's war effort with enthusiasm, helping its readers perform their national service outside and inside their homes, and reminding them of their duty to remain faithful to boyfriends and husbands serving abroad. Surrounded by the chaos, uncertainty, and trauma of war, the magazine's romantic provision of escapism becomes crucial. During the war's closing months, it prepares its readers for peace.

Examining magazines issued in 1948, Chapter Five surveys *Woman's Weekly* during the third year of peace. Helping its readers cope with the domestic privations caused by the post-war Labour government's programme of austerity, it probes the apparently bipartisan publication's engagements with governmental politics. Its attitudes towards housework and etiquette offer means of classifying its class-conscious readership, whose contribution to the rebuilding of post-war British society is, apparently, domestic.

Finally, Chapter Six examines *Woman's Weekly* magazines produced in 1958. Within a post-austerity culture of consumerism, a more modernised Britain is emerging: the magazine acknowledges the advent of television and the increasing availability of domestic appliances, helps readers update their homes, accepts that some of its married readers may have jobs, and reaches out to newly-

categorised teenage girls. Moreover, it seeks to legitimise a more domesticated masculinity; despite this however, similarities between *Woman's Weekly's* domestic culture and the domestic culture criticised by Betty Friedan in *The Feminine Mystique* raise feminist concerns about the status of housewives in the magazine.

Chapter One: Armistice

(November 1918-November 1919)

The Armistice came into effect on 11 November 1918, bringing the First World War to an end. For the past four years, *Woman's Weekly* had been helping its readers to 'do their bit' for Britain's war effort, encouraging them to work in war-related occupations,¹ produce comforts for serving and wounded troops,² raise funds,³ and reduce domestic waste⁴ – following the cessation of hostilities, it helped them to negotiate their return to 'normal' life. Surveying *Woman's Weekly* magazines published between 16 November 1918 and 10 November 1919, this chapter examines how they construct the war's impact on their readers' daily lives during the year following the Armistice. For clarity, its argument is divided into four sections. "Redefining masculinity and femininity" examines *Woman's Weekly* romance narratives that give the war a happy ending by returning servicemen to their womenfolk, recovered from the physical and psychological injuries they sustained during combat. Following women's public contribution to the war effort, "Back to home and duty?" explores *Woman's Weekly*'s attitude towards readers working in paid employment within a social culture that may be encouraging middle-class women back into fulltime domesticity, now that their war services are no longer required. "Keeping up

¹ Advert, "Women Munition Workers," WW 12 Jan 1918, 21; "Forestry – A New Work For Girls," WW 19 Jan 1918, 37; "Learn to Drive a Motor Tractor," WW 9 Feb 1918, 92; "'Wireless' Work For Girls," WW 23 Feb 1918, 129.

² Mary Marryat, "More Millions of Books Wanted!" WW 12 Jan 1918, 32; Fanny Bennett, "What to Grow for the Wounded," WW 2 Mar 1918, 146.

³ "Turning Tins To Good Account," WW 19 Jan 1918, 43; A Business Girl, "The Bag Bazaar I Planned," WW 9 Mar 1918, 170.

⁴ "How You Must Save The Meat!" WW 5 Jan 1918, 14; "Living Within The Rations," WW 2 Feb 1918, 72-73.

workplace appearances” addresses some of the class anxieties experienced by readers working in paid employment; finally, “Passing as leisure class?” considers the social aspirations of readers assumed to simultaneously desire and disapprove of leisure-class culture. To frame *Woman’s Weekly*’s uniquely lower-middle-class response to the First World War, the opening section will introduce four contemporary magazines that I use for strategic comparison. Made throughout the chapter on the assumption that class status is relative, these comparisons will highlight *Woman’s Weekly*’s distinctiveness from rival publications on the newsstand, indicate the relatively low socio-economic status of its target readers, and suggest economic and ideological bases for the magazine’s distinctively lower-middle-class identity between November 1918 and November 1919.

The Lady, Peg’s Paper, My Weekly, People’s Friend

Between November 1918 and November 1919, *Woman’s Weekly* ranks towards the lower end of the women’s magazine market in terms of material quality, cost, and content. At the upper end is *The Lady*: costing 4d per (weekly) issue and concerned principally with Court and Society,⁵ concert, theatre, and book reviews,⁶ expensive clothes and home furnishings,⁷ public schools and desirable residences,⁸ this publication targets leisured, educated readers with large disposable incomes; printed on large sheets of smooth, creamy paper, *The Lady*

⁵ “Social Notes,” *TL* 13 Mar 1919, 245-247.

⁶ “At The Play,” *TL* 20 Mar 1919, 292; “Musical Notes,” *TL* 3 Apr 1919, 340; “Books Of The Day,” *TL* 10 Apr 1919, 394.

⁷ “After-War House Decoration,” *TL* 13 Mar 1919, 254; “Spring Suits At Harrods,” *TL* 13 Mar 1919, 255.

⁸ Moira, “Where to Live,” *TL* 20 Mar 1919, 287-288; Brenda, “Where To Educate Our Boys And Girls,” *TL* 3 Apr 1919, 344.

even demands a luxurious quantity of physical space in which to be read. At the lower end of the market, 1d story magazine *Peg's Paper* entertains working-class mill girls⁹ with thrilling romances,¹⁰ cinema reviews and gossip,¹¹ piano scores for popular songs,¹² fortune-telling features,¹³ and readers' dilemmas, romantic and otherwise, which are addressed each week in Peg's "Private Postbag".¹⁴ 1½d magazine *My Weekly* is similarly sensational, printing dramatic-sounding romances,¹⁵ dream interpretations,¹⁶ "The Revelations of Gipsy Sarah",¹⁷ and a series in which "girls" from countries including Australia, France, and America describe their ideal husbands.¹⁸ *People's Friend* is more staid than *My Weekly*, favouring romantic sentiment over sensation¹⁹ – also costing 1½d, it targets readers on similarly low incomes, whose taste in fiction is, however, more respectable. The material quality of *Peg's Paper*, *My Weekly*, and *People's Friend* is considerably lower than that of *The Lady*. British Library copies of *Peg's Paper* are now so fragile that their pages have been preserved in acid-free slips.

⁹ In her inaugural editorial, 'Peg' states that "[n]ot so very long ago I was a mill-girl, too" ("Let's be Pals," *PP* 15 May 1919, 1).

¹⁰ Elizabeth Ward, "When A Wicked Man Loves," *PP* 22 May 1919, 1-5; Anna Fell, "Was She A Wife?" *PP* 5 June 1919, 25-28, 30.

¹¹ "Peg Trots Round Filmland," *PP* 14 Aug 1919, 23 (weekly).

¹² Mackenzie Murdoch, "I'll Love You Tomorrow As I Love You Today," *PP* 19 Jun 1919, 16-17; Trevor Huntley and Herman Darewski, "Dear Dreamy Memory Land," *PP* 19 Sept 1919, 16-17.

¹³ The Mystery Woman, "Your Woman Of Mystery," *PP* 3 Jul 1919, 32 (weekly).

¹⁴ *PP* 14 Aug 1919, 28 (weekly).

¹⁵ "The Love Thief," *MW* w/e 31 May 1919, 339-340, 351; "The Bride of Fear," *MW* w/e 7 Jun 1919, 355-357.

¹⁶ Dream Expert, "The Message of Dreams," *MW* w/e 31 May 1919, 351; Dream Expert, "Do You Dream?" *MW* w/e 26 Jul 1919, 71.

¹⁷ Gipsy Sarah, *MW* w/e 21 Jun 1919, 401-402.

¹⁸ An Australian girl, "An Anzac For Me," *MW* w/e 31 May 1919, 344; Yvette, The Little "Frenchy," "Why I'd Like An Englishman," *MW* w/e 7 Jun 1919, 365; Miss America, "You Can't Live On Love," *MW* w/e 14 Jun 1919, 386.

¹⁹ Percy Owens, "Nancy's True Love," *PF* 25 Jan 1919, 40-41; J. Helen Easton, "Little Kitty Farrell," *PF* 22 Feb 1919, 92.

Printed on paper that is now crumbling and easily torn, in ink now fading and wearing off in places, *Woman's Weekly* magazines produced during 1918 and 1919 are of tangibly poor quality. Their 1½d cover price puts *Woman's Weekly* readers in the same economic demographic as readers of *My Weekly* and *People's Friend*. Whilst advertisers encourage *The Lady's* affluent readers to consume the latest expensive beauty treatments,²⁰ labour-saving devices,²¹ and even motorised transport,²² readers of *Woman's Weekly*, *Peg's Paper*, *My Weekly*, and *People's Friend* are targeted by adverts for budget cosmetics,²³ domestic products, and foodstuffs²⁴ – although it is most unlikely that readers of *The Lady* can all afford the luxuries proffered by its advertisers,²⁵ the absence of adverts for cars, motorcycles, and labour savers from the cheaper magazines indicates that such items are assumed outside their target readers' budgets even in fantasy.

In attempting to determine *Woman's Weekly's* class status between November 1918 and November 1919, it is important to note that the magazine's interests overlap with those of *Peg's Paper*, *My Weekly*, and *People's Friend*, ranking it closer to these cheap titles than upmarket publication *The Lady* by content as well as budget. Cinema reviews and gossip, fate and fortune features, and piano scores for popular songs target readers with interests similar to those

²⁰ Advert, "Valaze Massagette," *TL* 23 Jan 1919, 85; advert, "Vernon-Ward Electro-therapeutic" obesity treatment, *TL* 13 Mar 1919, 267.

²¹ Advert, "Daisy" vacuum cleaner, *TL* 27 Mar 1919, ii; advert, "Carron Company" gas fire, *TL* 23 Jan 1919, 85.

²² Advert, "Rudge Multi" motorcycle, *TL* 1 May 1919, 467; advert, "Standard Motor Co.," *TL* 24 Apr 1919, bc.

²³ Advert, "Oatine" face cream, *WW* 4 Jan 1919, ii; advert, "Ven-Yusa" face cream, *WW* 4 Jan 1919, 14.

²⁴ Advert, "Cailler's Cocoa," *WW* 8 Mar 1919, 186; advert, "Glitto" scouring product, *WW* 15 Mar 1919, bc.

²⁵ *The Lady* advertises domestic service positions and would presumably, therefore, have been read by servants as well as employers.

of readers of *Peg's Paper* and *My Weekly*; preferring romantic sentiment to sensation however, *Woman's Weekly* readers share their taste in fiction with readers of *People's Friend*. Visually, *Woman's Weekly* identifies more closely with *Peg's Paper* and *My Weekly* than with *People's Friend*. Using eye-catching pictures and headlines to grab prospective readers' attention, the front covers of *Woman's Weekly*, *Peg's Paper*, and *My Weekly* are more visually appealing than the front covers of *People's Friend*, which are filled with closely-written advertisements for domestic products and cosmetics. Similar in design to front covers of *The Lady*, also covered by advertisements, *People's Friend's* front covers associate the magazine visually with the more upmarket publication, suggesting that its readers aspire to the status of readers of the latter – perhaps they want casual observers to think that they are reading *The Lady*? Inside, too, *Woman's Weekly's* layout is most similar to the layout of *My Weekly*: both magazines' content is set out in columns of closely written print, relieved by the illustrations, headlines, taglines, and adverts that pull readers' eyes from text to text. Lines and boxes distinguish features clearly from one another, and there is as much blank space as rationed paper will allow. Quickly and easily scanned, these magazines target busy women with limited time for reading. The inside layout of *People's Friend*, like its front cover, lacks this immediate visual appeal: wider pages are harder to scan quickly, pictures are smaller and fewer in number, and titles are smaller and more closely set. *People's Friend*, its layout indicates, should be read more slowly and thoroughly than *Peg's Paper*, *My Weekly*, and *Woman's Weekly*, by readers with more leisure. Combining interests in cinema, popular song, fate and fortune, and sentimental romance, *Woman's Weekly* targets readers who enjoy some of the 'lower' elements of *Peg's Paper*

and *My Weekly*, but who share *People's Friend* readers' more respectable literary tastes; its front covers and inside layout associate the publication visually with *Peg's Paper* and *My Weekly*, whose readers have less time for reading than readers of *The Lady* and *People's Friend*. These conflicting distinctions suggest that *Woman's Weekly's* class position between November 1918 and November 1919 may be complex.

Redefining masculinity and femininity

Woman's Weekly responds to the end of the First World War by expressing a desire to return to pre-war normality, figured as the restoration to home and health of men who fought in the conflict. British masculinity emerged from the First World War in crisis. Having been persuaded to enlist by recruitment propaganda trading on stoic, competitive, and heroic ideas of manhood towards which they were supposed to aspire,²⁶ many servicemen were seemingly emasculated by combat, turned into dependants by physical and psychological injuries. Shellshock, a form of post-traumatic stress disorder linked to military combat, shared many of its symptoms with hysteria, a so-called feminine condition:²⁷ subject to tremors, depression, and bouts of mania, shellshock sufferers undermined notions of masculinity based on authority, bravery, and self-control.²⁸ Shellshocked servicemen's apparent emasculation caused new

²⁶ Nicola Cooper and Stephen McVeigh, *Men After War* (Abington: Routledge, 2013), 2.

²⁷ Elaine Showalter, *Hystories: Hysterical Epidemics and Modern Culture* (London: Picador, 1998), 72; Laurinda Stryker, "Mental Cases: British Shellshock and the Politics of Interpretation," in *Evidence, History and the Great War. Historians and the Impact of 1914-18*, ed. Gail Braybon (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2003), 157.

²⁸ Fiona Reid, *Broken Men: Shell Shock, Treatment and Recovery in Britain 1914-1930* (London: Continuum, 2010), 21.

gender codes to emerge, which Nicola Humble discerns in interwar middlebrow fiction. Humble attributes “newly emotional, psychologically wounded” male characters in middlebrow novels to shellshock’s so-called feminisation of male sufferers, and notes that their female counterparts become “competent, assured and unemotional” in response; ‘maternal’ female characters’ ‘mothering’ of childish men is, she argues, a further manifestation of these codes.²⁹ Constituting indirect, coded responses to the First World War, these characters³⁰ reproduce the reluctance or inability of many servicemen to discuss their combat experiences alongside shellshock’s symptoms – their code of silence coincided with what Alison Light identifies as a general middle-class refusal to confront the war, manifest in the conflict’s virtual absence from fiction published during the 1920s.³¹ The following section addresses responses by *Woman’s Weekly* romance narratives to the impact of combat on British masculinity. Seeking to give the war a happy ending, in fantasy and in actuality, these narratives give conflicting accounts: on the one hand, they attempt to reinstate authoritative pre-war masculinity, whilst on the other, traces of masculine fragility signal the emergence of new gender codes.

Masculine dependency materialises in *Woman’s Weekly*’s assumption that some of its readers are nursing physically and psychologically wounded veterans, evident in recipes for invalids, adverts for antiseptic Sanitas (“Best Wash for Wounds”) and nerve tonic Phosferine, instructions for making an invalid’s bed-table, a list of “Sick-Room Don’ts”, and a home cure for shell-

²⁹ Nicola Humble, *The Feminine Middlebrow Novel, 1920s to 1950s: Class, Domesticity, and Bohemianism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 197-198, 200.

³⁰ E.g. Bertie Wooster (P.G. Wodehouse), Lord Peter Wimsey (Dorothy L. Sayers), Albert Campion (Margery Allingham).

³¹ Alison Light, *Forever England: Femininity, Literature and Conservatism Between the Wars* (London: Routledge, 1991), 71.

shock.³² A heart-breaking letter to agony aunt Mrs Marryat from a bride-to-be wondering whether to end her engagement since she has heard that her fiancé may catch tuberculosis as a result of being gassed proves this assumption to be correct in one case at least;³³ potentially incapable of supporting a wife and family, by pre-war standards this man does seem to have been emasculated by combat. Wounded veterans' dependency on their families was problematic in a culture that placed men at the head of home and family.³⁴ In response therefore, *Woman's Weekly* discourses surrounding injured ex-servicemen seek to restore them to physical, psychological, and economic health as quickly as possible. Reassuring readers that changes to their menfolk are only temporary, an advice columnist promises "The Girl Who Is Going To Marry" that "war husbands" will not "be very different from peace husbands [...] it is surprising how quickly we all become normal again even after the greatest upheavals".³⁵ Evidently hoping to capitalise on readers' desire for this return to normality, Phosferine adverts featuring servicemen like Private A. J. Walker, who "finally regained [his] normal health" after taking the nerve tonic, sell their product on the basis that it will cure shellshock and other war-related conditions.³⁶ Readers are encouraged to purchase Christmas presents crafted by patients at the St Dunstan's Hostel for Blinded Soldiers and Sailors, whose "work" (baskets, trays, gardening equipment, toys) figures as a means of restoring their economic producer-status:

³² Advert, "Sanitas," WW 30 Nov 1918, 349; "Sick-Room Don'ts," WW 3 May 1919, 347; The London Girl, "Whispers," WW 3 May 1919, 341.

³³ Mary Marryat, "Just For A Change," WW 7 Dec 1918, 372.

³⁴ Marina Larsson, "'The Home is always here for Him': Disabled Soldiers and Family Caregiving in Australia after the First World War," in *War Wounds: Medicine and the Trauma of Conflict*, ed. Ashley Ekins and Elizabeth Stewart (Wollombi: Excile Publishing Ltd, 2011), 81.

³⁵ "The Girl Who Is Going To Marry," WW 11 Jan 1919, 19.

³⁶ Advert, "Phosferine," WW 24 May 1919, 422.

by purchasing these items, readers themselves ensure that they, and their makers, are “necessary” and “useful to the community”.³⁷ Promising readers that their wounded menfolk will be restored to normal, these lifestyle features inscribe the war into a real-life romance narrative that will end happily. In doing so, they actualise their generic provision of escape from the traumatic aftermath of war.

The romantic promise made by these *Woman’s Weekly* lifestyle discourses that wounded veterans will recover is delivered by the magazine’s fictional romances, whose heroes recover their pre-conflict masculinity swiftly and fully. Illustrated tall and broad-shouldered, they exude manly authority visually; their marriage proposals, which demonstrate their readiness to support families, equate their physical and psychological recovery with their resumption of their pre-war socio-economic status. Emphasising the latter, heroes Derrick Jeffries and Oswald Jackson resume their civilian occupations before proposing, Jackson after recovering from wounds.³⁸ Their quick recoveries counter the trend identified by Humble in interwar middlebrow fiction. Echoing Humble, Jay Dixon equates boyish heroes and nurturing heroines in interwar Mills & Boon romances with war-damaged masculinity;³⁹ Chapter Two will argue that these gender relations materialise explicitly in *Woman’s Weekly*’s 1928 romances, but there is little sign of them during 1918-19. Even the veteran heroes of nurse-patient romances “Cinderella’s Christmas” and “Just A Make-Believe Engagement” do not require nursing,⁴⁰ and “A Secret For Two” even casts its

³⁷ “Christmas Presents Made By Our Blinded Soldiers,” *WW* 14 Dec 1918, 378.

³⁸ “Nancy Out Of Work,” *WW* 12 Apr 1919, 274-275, 280; Madge S. Smith, “The Girl At His Desk,” *WW* 1 Feb 1919, 82-84.

³⁹ Jay Dixon, *The Romance Fiction of Mills & Boon, 1909-1990s* (London: UCL Press Ltd, 1999), 64-65.

⁴⁰ Convalescent Derek moves freely around the ward, flirting with VAD Vera and helping with the Christmas decorations, and leaves hospital in time for Christmas (Mary Fortune Clegg, “Cinderella’s Christmas,” *WW* 7 Dec 1918, 357-359); Brian Tempest,

hero as ‘carer’ and heroine as invalid by summoning ex-serviceman Harry to the bedside of pneumonia victim Faith, whose “frailness [...] seemed to demand the protection of his great strength” (Fig. 1).⁴¹

IMAGE DELETED

Fig. 1. Harry proposing to Faith (“A Secret For Two,” WW 15 Apr 1919, 255).

Inasmuch as these *Woman’s Weekly* romances make desirable the promise that wounded ex-servicemen will recover fully, they make desirable a return to the prevailing pre-war gender status quo. They also perform a palliative function: by restoring veterans at the level of fantasy, these romances create an imagined space of relief from the traumatic aftermath of war. The need of some readers for this relief is highlighted by a front cover illustration depicting a young widow alone with her husband’s uniformed portrait, alongside a poem by *Woman’s Weekly* romance author Winifred Carter suggesting that the couple will be reunited in Heaven (Fig. 2). Transposing the heroine’s final reunion with her hero to an eternal afterlife, this visual romance literalises the “religious” promise

although reunited with Cynthia as her patient, is merely faking a relapse in order to get out of marrying another woman, and rebuffs her sole attempt to nurse him in a manner leaving heroine and reader in no doubt that he has recovered: “‘It is time for your tonic, Colonel Tempest,’ she said [...] But two strong arms encircled her, and would not let go” (Nora Shandon, “Just A Make-Believe Engagement,” WW 8 Feb 1919, 96).

⁴¹ “A Secret For Two,” WW 5 Apr 1919, 255.

of a better world associated by Kaler with the genre,⁴² giving comfort and hope of a happy ending to those bereaved by the war.⁴³

IMAGE DELETED

Fig. 2. A war widow looks forward to reunion with her husband in heaven (“Only Your Slippers,” WW 8 Feb 1919, fc).

Woman’s Weekly’s romantic promise of a return to pre-war normality is undercut, however, by traces of the ‘emasculated’ interwar masculinity identified by Humble and Dixon. ‘Mother-son’ gender relations emerge in conduct column “The Girl Who Is Going To Marry”, which, despite claiming that marital relations will be unaffected by men’s combat experiences, infantilises an ex-serviceman: “Douglas may be a little irritable and unsettled at first [...] keep [sweet tempered], remembering all that the poor boy has gone through”.⁴⁴ Traces of “newly emotional” interwar masculinity⁴⁵ are apparent in Jim, hero of “When Jim Desart Came Home”. Describing Jim’s “lean, virile face” and broad shoulders, the narrative garbs him in pre-war manliness, highlighted through contrast to his wife Wendy, who flings herself into his arms “like a woman” and bursts into tears upon greeting him; Jim’s “mad, wild surge of longing” for “the

⁴² Anne Kaler, “Introduction: Conventions of the Romance Genre,” in *Romantic Conventions*, ed. Anne K. Kaler and Rosemary E. Johnson-Kurek (Bowling Green OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1999) 4.

⁴³ A similar message of hope is transmitted by May Wynne’s “The Message,” WW 15 Mar 1919, 196.

⁴⁴ “The Girl Who Is Going To Marry,” WW 11 Jan 1919, 19.

⁴⁵ Humble, *Middlebrow*, 200.

beloved homefolk” suggests that he is equally emotional, however. Perhaps realising that his feelings seem more suited to the heroine of a sensation novel than a British soldier, he chastises himself for “[g]etting romantic and sentimental” although, by blushing as he does so he undercuts this assertion of cool-headedness.⁴⁶ Appearing in January 1919 and December 1918 respectively, childish Douglas and emotional Jim conflict with other *Woman’s Weekly* romance discourses’ promises of a swift return to pre-war normality and indicate that anxieties surrounding interwar masculinity and their literary forms of expression were surfacing in this publication almost directly following the cessation of hostilities.

Another reading of *Woman’s Weekly*’s restorative romance narratives might link veteran heroes’ swift and full recoveries to the emergence of denial surrounding the First World War in interwar middle-class British culture identified by Alison Light.⁴⁷ Physical and psychological injuries are downplayed or erased completely by these narratives, echoing ex-servicemen’s code of silence. The “hollow place” above Brian Tempest’s temple is absent from illustrations;⁴⁸ Gerald Cotterell sits erect and smiling in his wheelchair, much of which is missing from the drawing (Fig. 3);⁴⁹ Molly leaps into “scarred” Tony John’s arms crying that, “I don’t see anything wrong with you!”,⁵⁰ and Leila decides that her scarred, lame fiancé is not “so different from the old Mike after all” as she “struggle[s] out of his arms”.⁵¹ Molly and Leila’s indifference to their heroes’ wounds may also function as a conduct guide to readers preparing to

⁴⁶ Winifred Carter, “When Jim Desart Came Home,” *WW* 21 Dec 1918, 396-397.

⁴⁷ Light, *England*, 71.

⁴⁸ Nora Shandon, “Just A Make-Believe Engagement,” *WW* 8 Feb 1919, 93.

⁴⁹ Nora Shandon, “The Gap In The Hedge,” *WW* 10 May 1919, 366.

⁵⁰ Phyllis Collard, “The Way Of A Girl’s Heart,” *WW* 22 Mar 1919, 213-214.

⁵¹ Mary Fortune Clegg, “Michael’s Secret,” *WW* 15 Feb 1919, 114-115.

greet similarly afflicted veterans. A similar set of codes underpins masculinity in *Woman's Weekly's* advertising discourses. Although servicemen advertising nerve tonic Phosferine are frank about having been wounded in battle, they refer to their injuries in the past tense and discuss them, and the conditions in which they were sustained, with a tragi-comic breeziness that glosses over both. Private A. M. MacDonnell claims that, although his “nerves began to get bad” after the Battle of Arras, thanks to the nerve tonic he “went into the Battle of Ypres feeling pretty well again”;⁵² Corporal McGhay dismisses “heavy shell fire” as “pretty lively”.⁵³ Whilst these veterans’ unflappability adds veracity to restoration romance narratives by indicating that, thanks to Phosferine, these shellshocked veterans have recovered their stiff-upper-lip pre-war masculinity along with their psychological health, their off-handed treatment of shellshock and its causes bespeaks a desire to forget. *Woman's Weekly* romance stories’ erasure of veterans’ physical and psychological wounds, paralleled by Phosferine adverts’ insistence on their real-life curability, positions the magazine’s eagerness to restore pre-war normality as quickly as possible at the beginning of the interwar middle-class culture of denial.

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Fig. 3. Gerald Cotterell in his wheelchair (Nora Shandon, “The Gap In The Hedge,” *WW* 10 May 1919, 366).

⁵² Advert, “Phosferine,” *WW* 12 Apr 1919, 294.

⁵³ Advert, “Phosferine,” *WW* 7 Dec 1918, 317.

Alongside promises made by *Woman's Weekly* romance narratives that male veterans will recoup their pre-war masculinity swiftly and fully, other discourses in the magazine articulate the “competent, assured and unemotional” femininity that, Humble argues, emerged alongside masculine fragility in interwar fiction. A transition from ‘pre-war weak’ to ‘post-war strong’ femininity is articulated in a self-defence article that links both the necessity of fending for oneself and *Woman's Weekly* readers’ ability to do so to the war’s impact on masculine and feminine norms. Raising concerns for women’s safety in public, “What Would *You* Do If You Were Suddenly Attacked?” appeals to a further anxiety surrounding male First World War veterans: that they may be unable to shed their violent battlefield personas in civilian life.⁵⁴ A matter of widespread social concern already experienced during the aftermaths of the Napoleonic and Crimean wars, fears that “men trained in the use of weaponry, brutalized on the battlefield and inured to violence would slide into violent crime” conflict with anxieties surrounding wounded veterans’ apparent feminisation.⁵⁵ Indeed, these conflicting versions of masculinity are seemingly the cause of *Woman's Weekly* readers’ public vulnerability. “Many of us have to fend for ourselves these days. It is not everyone’s good fortune to have a male escort on all occasions”.⁵⁶ In responding to concerns that veterans brutalised or emasculated by combat may attack women or be incapable of defending them, “What Would *You* Do If You Were Suddenly Attacked?” deploys conflicting femininities: by drawing *Woman's Weekly* readers’ attention to their physical vulnerability in streets

⁵⁴ “What Would *You* Do If You Were Suddenly Attacked?” WW 29 Mar 1919, 238.

⁵⁵ Clive Emsley, “Violent Crime in England in 1919: post-war anxieties and press narratives,” *Continuity and Change* Volume 23, Issue 1 (2008): 17.

⁵⁶ “What Would *You* Do If You Were Suddenly Attacked?” WW 29 Mar 1919, 238.

populated by brutes and invalids, the article encourages them to view themselves as weak and defenceless, perhaps conditioning them for a return to the safety of their homes, but by teaching them how to defend themselves, it portrays them as women of action, strong in body and mind. The latter attributes are rooted explicitly in women's large-scale entry into the public sphere. "It is surprising the amount of muscle the girl of today has developed. Four years of war-work have given her a generous store of nerve, too".⁵⁷ In taking over male volunteers and conscript's civilian occupations, these women appear to have absorbed some aspects of pre-war masculinity. Their experience of the war has toughened them, readying them to survive in a society in which they may no longer be able to depend on men.

Like their wounded male counterparts, *Woman's Weekly's* female war veterans surface in the magazine's fiction. As though recognising ex-servicemen's need to recoup their authoritative, dominant pre-war masculinity, these women are absent from the magazine's romance stories, where their physical and mental strength could impede heroes' rehabilitation. Rather than appearing in the characters of romance heroines therefore, these female veterans surface in the character of *Woman's Weekly's* resident sleuth Phinella the Famous Lady Detective, who exemplifies the competent interwar femininity that developed alongside newly fragile manhood following the war. Phinella's wartime exploits reflect (albeit on a more thrilling scale) *Woman's Weekly* readers' own war service in the public sphere; continuing to detect after the Armistice, she expresses hope that women will make greater public contributions to post-war society. Looking back to Victorian and Edwardian fictional

⁵⁷ Ibid.

detectives as well as forward to their interwar descendants, Phinella is a strong role model for self-supporting women. Her ‘feminism’ is thrown into relief through comparison to her *My Weekly* counterpart, Nora Conlan.

The Exploits of Phinella Martin was commissioned in 1916 by Maud Hughes, a “committed” though “not politically active” supporter of women’s rights who worked on *Woman’s Weekly*’s editorial staff.⁵⁸ Deliberately or otherwise, Hughes’ feminism materialises in Phinella’s active, assertive persona and interventions in the public sphere. During the war, the Lady Detective engages in international counter-espionage, intercepting and decoding German spies’ weather reports, uncovering a German terrorist plot, and foiling a U-boat attack.⁵⁹ She even experiences trench warfare, when a German spy disguised as a British nurse ‘gases’ her using a substance concealed in a perfume bottle.⁶⁰ Published alongside articles encouraging *Woman’s Weekly* readers to contribute to Britain’s war effort by manufacturing munitions, taking over men’s civilian jobs, nursing, and undertaking catering and clerical work for the armed forces,⁶¹ Phinella’s patriotic adventures constitute fantasy versions of working women’s direct influence over the conflict’s outcome. Continuing to intervene in international politics after the war has ended by halting a revolution due to be “performed” by Bolsheviks masquerading as a film crew, Phinella extends her

⁵⁸ Julia Jones, *The Adventures of Margery Allingham* (Pleshey: Golden Duck [UK] Ltd, 2009), 54-55.

⁵⁹ Emmy Allingham, “What the ‘Phone Revealed,” *WW* 27 Apr 1918, 278-279; EA, “More Valuable than Diamonds” *WW* 16 Nov 1918, 321-322; EA, “Captured by U-Boat” *WW* 23 Nov 1918, 335-336.

⁶⁰ Emmy Allingham, “In the Pay of the Kaiser” *WW* 15 Jun 1918, 392-393.

⁶¹ “Engineering Work for Girls,” *WW* 18 May 1918, 334; “Me on a Tramcar! The Adventurous Life of a Girl Driver,” *WW* 13 Jul 1918, 21; “What it means to be a V. A. D. nurse,” *WW* 20 Jul 1918, 42; “How I Helped To Feed Tommy,” *WW* 3 Aug 1918, 69; “Girl Clerks for the Army,” *WW* 31 Aug 1918, 131.

public service beyond the war.⁶² Illustrated stalking suspects, peeking around doorways, bursting in on masked gangs, and even confronting a (“rather good-looking”) U-boat commander on the deck of his submarine (Fig. 4), Phinella is visibly a woman of action and initiative, commensurate with women’s publically empowering contribution to the war effort.⁶³

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Fig. 4. Phinella confronting the U-boat commander (Emmy Allingham, “Captured By U-boat,” *WW* 23 Nov 1918, 335).

Female detective fiction links *Woman’s Weekly* generically to *My Weekly* between November 1918 and November 1919: evidently, readers of both magazines are presumed to desire assertive female fictional characters immediately after the First World War. Several female detectives appear in *My Weekly* during that year⁶⁴ – Phinella’s closest equivalent is Nora Conlan who, like *Woman’s Weekly*’s sleuth, solves a series of mysteries, operates alongside a male colleague of whom she invariably gets the better, and is physically active in her quest for the truth, “burst[ing]” into a room to confront an emerald thief with her “pearl-handled revolver”.⁶⁵ Phinella and Nora are even visually similar to one another, pictured calling male accomplices on the telephone (Fig. 5):⁶⁶ the

⁶² Emmy Allingham, “The Fatal Shot,” *WW* 26 Apr 1919, 330-331.

⁶³ Emmy Allingham, “Captured by U-boat,” *WW* 23 Nov 1918, 335.

⁶⁴ Marion West, journalist and detective (“The Cunning of Lu-Chong,” *MW* w/e 19 Oct 1918, 248-249, 254); Nora Grant, an American woman who becomes involved in Allied counter-espionage (“Shadowed by Spies,” *MW* w/e 4 Jan 1919, 22-23); Lilian Webster, British Secret Service agent (Lilian Webster, of the Secret Service, “My Most Daring Masquerades,” *MW* w/e 29 Mar 1919, 195-197).

⁶⁵ “The Stolen Emerald,” *MW* w/e 2 Aug 1919, 86-87, 98.

⁶⁶ Emmy Allingham, “The ‘Valerie Crocan’ Affair,” *WW* 14 Jun 1919, 471; “The Haunting Messages,” *MW* w/e 9 Aug 1919, 108.

association with modern technology highlighting their heroines' 'modern' outlook, the similarity between these images suggests that Nora may have been influenced directly by Phinella. Phinella's male sidekick is Inspector Staines of Scotland Yard, to whom she relates in the manner of Sherlock Holmes to Inspectors Lestrade and Gregson: Staines consults her when he is at a loss, takes her to the crime scene, watches her sift through evidence that confounds him, follows her orders, and finally declares her solution "a miracle".⁶⁷ Staines' "frank amazement" at Phinella's methods also recalls Dr Watson's adulation of Holmes.⁶⁸ Likewise, Nora is assisted by a barrister called David Atherton who, like Watson, narrates her cases and remains in the dark about her conclusions until she reveals the solution during the *denouement*.⁶⁹ Taking over her detective father's civilian duties when he was called up into the Secret Service, Nora associates detection explicitly with women's war work.⁷⁰

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Fig. 5. Phinella and Nora speaking on the telephone (Emmy Allingham, "The Valerie Crocan Affair," *WW* 14 Jun 1919, 471; "The Haunting Messages," *MW* w/e 9 Aug 1919, 110).

Female detectives Phinella and Nora are generically predisposed to behaviour that challenges conservative notions of femininity. Mary Cadogan and

⁶⁷ Emmy Allingham, "In The Shadow Of The Gallows," *WW* 15 Mar 1919, 205-206.

⁶⁸ Emmy Allingham, "In The Shadow Of The Gallows," *WW* 15 Mar 1919, 206.

⁶⁹ "The Adventures of Nora Conlan, Detective," *MW* w/e 12 Jul 1919, 23-25.

⁷⁰ "The Adventures of Nora Conlan, Detective," 23.

Patricia Craig argue that, from the 1861 appearance of William Stephen Hayward's Mrs Pascal, who removes her crinoline to pursue a criminal, fictional female detectives have embodied adventurous femininity.⁷¹ Detecting alongside psychologically fragile male sleuths Lord Peter Wimsey and Albert Campion, interwar fictional female detectives Harriet Vane and Amanda Fitton embody the competent femininity that developed alongside war-damaged masculinity. It is even possible that Phinella influenced Fitton directly: her creator, Emily ('Emmy') Allingham, was the mother of Fitton's creator, detective novelist Margery.⁷² Phinella and Nora's competency is highlighted by their cool-headedness and rational approach to detection (both examine dead bodies without turning a hair⁷³ and use logic rather than intuition to solve crimes⁷⁴); their marital prospects distinguish them from one another however, aligning Nora more closely with pre-war female detectives with more conservative personal *denouements*. A frequent outcome of Nora's detection is that wrongly accused suspects are cleared of suspicion and free to marry as a consequence.⁷⁵ These subsidiary romantic happy endings probably anticipate Nora's own: David declares repeatedly that he is falling in love with her, albeit to the reader rather

⁷¹ Mary Cadogan and Patricia Craig, *The Lady Investigates: Women Detectives and Spies in Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 15-37.

⁷² Jones, *Allingham*, 54-55. Allingham's husband Herbert also published fiction in the magazine (e.g. "The Green-Eyed," serialised in WW 16 Feb 1918 – 4 May 1918).

⁷³ Emmy Allingham, "The Clue Of The Wet Paint," WW 12 Apr 1919, 288; "The Adventures of Nora Conlan, Detective," MW w/e 12 Jul 1919, 24.

⁷⁴ Emmy Allingham, "The Clue Of The Wet Paint," WW 12 Apr 1919, 288; "The Haunting Messages," MW w/e 9 Aug 1919, 110. Cadogan and Craig distinguish between female detectives who "[succeed] because of specialized 'feminine' knowledge" and those who use logic to "[compete] with male detectives on equal terms" (Cadogan and Craig, *Lady*, 12).

⁷⁵ "The Adventures of Nora Conlan, Detective," MW w/e 12 Jul 1919, 23-25; "The Black Pearl Mystery," MW w/e 19 Jul 1919, 48-49, 59; "The Mainwaring Mystery," MW w/e 16 Jul 1919, 67-68, 77; "The Stolen Emerald," MW w/e 2 Aug 1919, 86-87, 98.

than to Nora herself,⁷⁶ and, although her series finishes abruptly on 6 September 1919 with an unfulfilled promise of another case the following week, were Nora to follow the precedent set by previous *My Weekly* detectives Marion West and Nora Grant, she would marry David and retire from detection.⁷⁷ Cadogan and Craig cite post-marital retirement as a means by which Victorian and Edwardian female detectives assured contemporary readers of their own respectability⁷⁸ and, although Nora's conformity to their model is speculative rather than confirmed, it is possible that she, too, would have retired into the domestic sphere after marrying David. Phinella also vanishes abruptly from *Woman's Weekly*, but, unlike Nora, with no prospect of a romantic *denouement* of her own: her relationship with Staines is entirely professional and, although she attracts male advances, she declines them and remains single throughout her series, her status explained by her once having "loved" and been "failed" by a man.⁷⁹ Her abrupt disappearance suggests that *Woman's Weekly* wished to retain the possibility of a return that never took place, but its effect is that the magazine's female detective retains her unmarried status without prospect of its changing until the end. Single and working in the public sphere, Phinella presents a more self-sufficient version of femininity than *Woman's Weekly* romance heroines, who leave their jobs to marry.

⁷⁶ "The Mainwaring Mystery," *MW* w/e 16 Jul 1919, 68, 77; "The Oakdene Jewels," *MW* w/e 16 Aug 1919, 132-133.

⁷⁷ "Lord Oldrey's Daughter," *MW* w/e 6 Sept 1919, 190; "The Masked Ball Mystery," *MW* w/e 16 Nov 1918, 319; "Captured for 'Keeps'," *MW* w/e 22 Mar 1919, 188-189.

⁷⁸ Cadogan and Craig, *Lady*, 17, 21.

⁷⁹ Emmy Allingham, "The Lady With The Taking Ways," *WW* 24 Jul 1920, 88-90; EA, "Joan Jones – Bank Clerk," *WW* 22 Mar 1919, 225-226; EA, "The Flat Of Mystery," *WW* 17 May 1919, 389-390.

Inherent in fictional detectives' unravelling of mysteries is the restoration of order. Detective novelist Dorothy L. Sayers believed that this was one of the genre's central attractions, writing that a detective story's possession of "an Aristotelian perfection of beginning, middle, and end" gave it "an advantage over every other kind of novel".⁸⁰ In providing readers with the satisfaction of narrative conclusiveness, detective stories function similarly to romances, and in this respect Phinella's adventures offer comfort and reassurance that all will end happily. Feminist critics Kathleen Klein and Joan Warthling Roberts argue that female detectives' successful solution of crimes is paradigmatic of women's restoration of social order;⁸¹ Maria Shaw and Sabine Vanacker place this paradigm in an interwar context, suggesting that the function of Agatha Christie's female detective Miss Marple is to "restore order to a shaken world".⁸² In this respect, Phinella, as well as helping to win the war through her public service, plays her part in rebuilding post-war society. Self-supporting and unmarried, she offers single women a positive role model, perhaps inspiring war widows and spinsters forced by the conflict to live without male support. Her adventures offer *Woman's Weekly* readers an alternative narrative of rehabilitation to that offered by the magazine's romances: social order is restored, but by a woman who (like many of her readers) made a public contribution to Britain's war effort, rather than by a veteran who has recovered

⁸⁰ Dorothy L. Sayers, "Introduction to *The Omnibus of Crime*," in *The Art of the Mystery Story*, ed. Howard Haycraft (New York: The Universal Library, Grosset & Dunlap, 1928-1929), 101.

⁸¹ Kathleen Klein, *The Woman Detective: Gender and Genre* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 11; Joan Warthling Roberts, "Amelia Butterworth: The Spinster Detective," in *Feminism and Women's Detective Fiction*, ed. Glenwood H. Irons (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 4.

⁸² Maria Shaw and Sabine Vanacker, *Reflecting on Miss Marple* (London: Routledge, 1991), 31.

his health and ability to work. Continuing to solve crimes after the Armistice, Phinella indicates that women are ready to consolidate their wartime entry into the workplace by remaining in public life. She is a role model for some of the magazine's working readers, whose status is examined in the following section of this chapter.

Back to home and duty?

Although *Woman's Weekly's* interests are primarily domestic, regular features supplying practical careers advice indicate that the magazine targets women working in paid employment as well as housewives. This support for working readers is a major distinguishing feature of the magazine – 'rival' publications such as *People's Friend*, *My Weekly*, and even *Peg's Paper*, which proclaims itself a magazine for working women, print comparatively little advice for readers in paid employment.⁸³ In providing this support, *Woman's Weekly* challenges accepted understandings of working women's status in the 1918-1919 popular press by demonstrating that not all publications encouraged their readers,

⁸³ A November 1918 *People's Friend* column predicts that some women who worked during the war will remain in employment now that it is over, however the magazine makes little effort to support them in this endeavour: a blouse pattern "For Business Wear" and an article outlining the duties of a ship stewardess (a suitable occupation for war widows) are the sole pieces of employment advice afforded to readers during the year following the Armistice ("After the War," *PF* 23 Nov 1918, 250; "From the Realms of Dress," *PF* 8 Feb 1919, 67; Eleanor, "Would You be a Stewardess?" *PF* 21 Jun 1919, 330). Hairstyling advice for eighteen-year-olds and taglines addressing "girls" indicate that *My Weekly* targets young, unmarried readers, however the magazine's workplace advice is restricted to three columns that mention office fashion (The Dress Expert, "For The Business Girl," *MW* w/e 8 Feb 1919, 85; The Dress Expert, "Ideas for The Business Girl," *MW* w/e 23 Aug 1919, 149; The Dress Expert, "Nifty for November," *MW* w/e 1 Nov 1919, 350). *Peg's Paper's* engagement with paid employment is purely frivolous, e.g. interpreting mill girls' character traits from the position of their shawls and playing milliner to six actresses for the chance to win a prize – the magazine contains no practical workplace advice between November 1918 and 1919 ("How do you Wear your Shawl?" *PP* 29 May 1919, 25; "Be A Milliner" *PP* 31 Jul 1919, 23).

in the words of a February 1919 advert in *Everywoman's* magazine, to go “Back Again to Home and Duty” once their war service had ended.⁸⁴ *Woman's Weekly's* distinctive support of its working readers throughout 1919 (and, as Chapters Two and Three will argue, throughout the interwar period) is a key distinction of its lower-middle-class culture.

The number of middle-class women undertaking jobs outside the home expanded enormously during the First World War, but many were made redundant by male demobilisation. Figures quoted by Deidre Beddoe suggest that, although 1.5 million entered the workforce, increasing the number of women in paid employment to almost five million by 1918, by November 1919 about three quarters of a million had resumed domestic life, pushed back into their homes, she argues, by the August 1919 Restoration of the Pre-War Practices Act, which returned civilian jobs to ex-servicemen and ended the demand for munitions and war services.⁸⁵ Beddoe claims that the government's post-Armistice call to women to return to home and duty was echoed by the popular press: during the interwar years, “only one desirable image was held up to women by all mainstream media agencies – that of housewife and mother”.⁸⁶ *Woman's Weekly* 1918-19 counters this however, supporting working readers by dispensing workplace conduct advice, helping them into employment, expanding their professional horizons, and even encouraging them to fantasise about working rather than domestic futures. Assuming that its target readers work in paid employment between school and marriage, and promoting mainly white-

⁸⁴ In Deidre Beddoe, *Back to Home and Duty: Women between the Wars, 1918-1939* (London: Pandora, 1987), 13.

⁸⁵ Beddoe, *Home*, 48.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 73.

collar occupations, *Woman's Weekly's* employment features classify them as largely lower middle class, although jobs in domestic service also appeal to working-class readers; preserving middle-class standards of respectability is of vital concern to both. *Woman's Weekly's* steadfast support of its working readers is, however, complicated (although not necessarily contradicted) by anxieties surrounding women's suitability for clerical work, rooted in its assumption that most will become housewives; its most explicit nod towards the government's pro-domesticity stance is a dramatic shift in attitude towards working wives. Addressing readers as both workers and workers' mothers, *Woman's Weekly's* careers features testify to a broad readership in terms of age.

Woman's Weekly's post-Armistice support of its working readers may be explained, in the first place, by an understanding that it may be economically impossible for some to leave paid employment now that the war is over. During 1918-19 the school leaving age was twelve, and "most" young women in Britain had paid jobs between finishing their education and marrying:⁸⁷ the magazine's support of its working readers is therefore less radical than realistic, more indicative of a target demographic that needs to earn a living than of proto-feminist leanings. Whilst weekly jobseekers' column "Chats on Careers" discusses occupations ranging from swimming instructor to gardener, regular office conduct columns, fashion advice for "business girls", and office-based workplace romance fiction suggest that the magazine expects most 1918-19 working readers to have clerical jobs, an area of employment becoming

⁸⁷ Selina Todd, "'You'd the Feeling You Wanted to Help': Young Women, Employment and the Family in Inter-War England," in *Women and Work Culture in Britain c. 1850-1950*, ed. Krista Cowman and Louise A. Jackson (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2005), 123.

increasingly feminised since the 1890s.⁸⁸ Beddoe acknowledges that female clerical workers were less likely than munitions workers and tram conductors to be made redundant by men's return to the civilian workforce following the end of the First World War;⁸⁹ some must have been demobilised however, when government war offices were disbanded. Their plight surfaces in romance story "The Girl At His Desk" whose heroine, Elsie, leaves work not so that a demobilised soldier can resume his job, but to provide another woman with employment. In a speech explaining the effects of female as well as male demobilisation on clerical workers, the bank's manager asks employees "who do not need to work for a living" to resign first, since he has been asked to employ "one or two girl-clerks from a big Government office that is being closed down"; Elsie, a comfortably-off doctor's daughter who "shan't suffer" from leaving work, resigns because she can afford to.⁹⁰ In thus distinguishing between women who can and cannot afford to leave their war jobs, "The Girl At His Desk" acknowledges that fulltime domesticity is impractical for those, like its target readers, on low incomes. The recent loss of male breadwinners may also account for *Woman's Weekly's* support of working readers. Whilst much of its careers advice targets school-leavers who expect to marry, business plans for hairdressers, teashop owners, and dressmakers target those seeking longer-term employment: war widows, orphans, and spinsters perhaps, forced by the loss of male providers in the war to support themselves and their dependants.⁹¹

⁸⁸ By 1921, up to 46 per cent of clerical workers were women (Jonathan Wild, *The Rise of the Office Clerk in Literary Culture* [Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006], 4-5).

⁸⁹ Beddoe, *Home*, 49.

⁹⁰ Madge S. Smith, "The Girl At His Desk," WW 1 Feb 1919, 82.

⁹¹ "The Office Friendships of the Business Girl," WW 3 May 1919, 347; "Chats on Careers: In a Tea-Shop," WW 2 Aug 1919, 90; "Chats on Careers: Dressmaking," WW 23 Aug 1919, 160.

Woman's Weekly's awareness that its working readers need to remain in paid employment surfaces partly in conduct and advice columns that, by encouraging them to maximise their potential and maintain their professionalism, help them to retain jobs in an employment market to which demobilised male civilians are returning.⁹² "How Do You Treat Your Typewriter?" gears typists towards greater efficiency, instructing them to fit new ribbons in the morning (since it is "annoying" to have to pause mid-work) and to use their machines' "labour-saving devices" (back spacer and tabulator key) lest they cease to function.⁹³ (Later in the research period, labour savers will be associated with domestic work; their appearance in a business context highlights 1918-19 *Woman's Weekly's* commitment to working readers, and evident acknowledgement that women's labour is not confined to the home.) "Love And The Business Girl" even hints that remaining in work is typists' patriotic duty:

In these go-ahead days, when industry which has suffered so badly by the chaos of war is [...] rebuilding, it behoves a girl in business to put forth all her energies and thought in the cause of her employer.⁹⁴

This declaration of support seems, however, motivated by concerns that readers may be inherently unsuited to office work, owing to their 'feminine' inability to "keep the personal note out of the office".⁹⁵ Having suggested that female typists are vital to rebuilding Britain's war-damaged economy, "Love And The Business Girl" castigates those who become distracted by their personal lives: "[t]he girl in love is a hopeless failure in business. She is apt to make mistakes in her work

⁹² E.g. "Business Girl Problems," WW 23 Nov 1918, 326; "Etiquette: The Business Girl," WW 4 Jan 1919, 16; "Etiquette: The Newcomer In An Office," WW 15 Mar 1919, 212; "Those First Days," WW 11 Oct 1919, 292; "Etiquette," WW 25 Oct 1919, 352.

⁹³ "How Do You Treat Your Typewriter?" WW 22 Mar 1919, 226.

⁹⁴ "Love And The Business Girl," WW 10 May 1919, 368.

⁹⁵ "The Man With The Misleading Manner," WW 14 Dec 1918, 377.

[...] that often bring about serious inconvenience and monetary loss”.⁹⁶

Likewise, office conduct column “Should She Ring Him Up?” lectures “Miss Typist” against “wasting office time” by using the office telephone to organise her social life.⁹⁷ These articles, whilst helping *Woman’s Weekly*’s typist readers to remain in employment during a period of upheaval in the jobs market, articulate concerns surrounding their ability to perform their chosen role.

Alongside these columns’ concerns that typists’ ‘feminine’ inability to separate the personal from the professional could damage their performance at work, other *Woman’s Weekly* employment discourses express fears that typing for a living could damage working readers’ aptitude for their ultimate career, housewifery. Some “Chats on Careers” openly assume that younger jobseekers are seeking work as a profitable means of filling time between school and marriage, “The London Telephone Service” stating that “a secure, well-paid job [...] until she marries is what many a wise girl seeks” and “The Shop Girl” declaring that “shop life has many advantages” for “the [...] girl [...] desirous of a fair living and a home until she gets married”.⁹⁸ Workplace romances “The Girl At His Desk”, “Castles In The Air”, and “Nancy Out Of Work” make this advice appear desirable by depicting typists and shop girls happily preparing to swap paid employment for marriage to the men of their dreams.⁹⁹ Whether or not clerical work is considered suitable preparation for wifehood is, however, subject to debate. On 20 November 1918, “A Mother-in-Law in Favour of the Business

⁹⁶ “Love And The Business Girl,” 368.

⁹⁷ “Should She Ring Him Up?” WW 19 Apr 1919, 305.

⁹⁸ “Chats on Careers: The London Telephone Service,” WW 30 Aug 1919, 166; “Chats on Careers: The Shop Girl,” WW 27 Sept 1919, 254.

⁹⁹ Madge S. Smith, “The Girl At His Desk,” WW 1 Feb 1919, 82-84; Rosalie Neish, “Castles In The Air,” WW 11 Jan 1919, 17-19; “Nancy Out Of Work,” WW 12 Apr 1919, 274-275, 280.

Girl as a Wife” pronounces office work excellent preparation for marriage: selfless, punctual, and methodical, the wife who was a business girl will run her home efficiently, and her experience of office life will make her a sympathetic companion to her husband.¹⁰⁰ Five months later, “Chats on Careers: Under-Nurse in a Day Nursery” asks “[h]ow many shorthand writers and typists [...] find this technical knowledge of much use once they abandon the key-board for their own little home and kitchen?” and suggests a career in childcare, on the basis that “[t]o know children is to insure for much happiness in married life”.¹⁰¹ In July, “Should the Undomesticated Girl think of Marriage?” strikes a compromise, suggesting that business girls perform their families’ household chores before work each morning in preparation for married life.¹⁰² In pointing to a growing conservatism in *Woman’s Weekly*’s attitude towards clerical work, these features reproduce contemporary anxieties surrounding typists. The clerical workforce had been growing increasingly feminised since the late nineteenth century, a factor attributed partly to the invention of the typewriter, which women were believed to operate more dextrously than men.¹⁰³ Contemporaries viewed the machine with ambivalence, perceiving it to both liberate and mechanise female operators: whilst representing new opportunities for women to enter the public sphere, it was believed to displace them from language and selfhood through the mechanisation of writing.¹⁰⁴ Prevented from developing their domestic skills by clerical work, typists may be disconnected from their ‘natural’ femininity.

¹⁰⁰ “A Mother-in-Law in Favour of the Business Girl as a Wife,” *WW* 20 Nov 1918, 341.

¹⁰¹ “Chats on Careers: Under-Nurse in a Day Nursery,” *WW* 26 Apr 1919, 327.

¹⁰² “Should the Undomesticated Girl think of Marriage?” *WW* 12 Jul 1919, 26.

¹⁰³ Margery W. Davies, *Woman’s Place is at the Typewriter: Office Work and Office Workers 1870-1930* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982), 53-55.

¹⁰⁴ Morag Shiach, *Modernism, Labour and Selfhood in British Literature and Culture 1890-1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 58.

Claims that typing is unsuitable preparation for wifehood are countered by *Woman's Weekly* romance "The Girl Who Was So Perfect", which demonstrates that typists can retain their domestic instincts. The narrative opens with a description of business girl Mollie's room in digs, its tasteful, economical furnishings a tribute to her housewifeliness:

It was a pretty room [...] the chest had a runner of hand-worked linen; linen-bag, nightdress case, shoe-bag, all worked to match. There was a faint scent of lavender about.¹⁰⁵

Mollie's cosy room and romance with Edward, whose closing love-declaration rewards her domestic-mindedness with the promise that she will soon furnish a home of her own, refutes claims that typists are 'defeminised' by their work. Mollie's character and lifestyle thus conflict with the shabby clutter surrounding a perhaps more renowned female clerical worker in contemporary literature, the typist in T. S. Eliot's "The Waste Land" (1922), whose makeshift domestic arrangements are slatternly by comparison:

Out of the window perilously spread
Her drying combinations touched by the sun's last rays,
On the divan are piled (last night her bed)
Stockings, slippers, camisoles and stays¹⁰⁶

Likewise, Mollie's loving relationship with Edward ("Oh you [...] *darling* Mollie!"¹⁰⁷) counters the typist's joyless seduction by a "small house-agent's clerk".¹⁰⁸

The time is now propitious, as he guesses,

¹⁰⁵ Madge S. Smith, "The Girl Who Was So Perfect," *WW* 22 Feb 1919, 133.

¹⁰⁶ T. S. Eliot, "The Waste Land," in *Collected Poems 1909-1962*, by T. S. Eliot (London: Faber and Faber, 1974 [1963]), 72, lines 224-227.

¹⁰⁷ Smith, "The Girl Who Was So Perfect," 134.

¹⁰⁸ Eliot, "Waste Land," 73, lines 231-232.

The meal is ended, she is bored and tired,
Endeavours to engage her in caresses
Which still are unproved, if undesired.
Flushed and decided, he assaults at once;
Exploring hands encounter no defence;
His vanity requires no response,
And makes a welcome of indifference¹⁰⁹

Both narratives describe a typist's 'sexual' encounter; but whereas Eliot's nameless, depersonalised typist's mechanical response to the clerk's lovemaking ("She smoothes her hair with automatic hand, / And puts a record on the gramophone"¹¹⁰) equates her with her machine, Mollie's domesticity and romantic connection with Edward demonstrate that she remains womanly (in a conservative sense). In the context of the concerns raised by other *Woman's Weekly* employment discourses, Mollie's romance with Edward reassures working readers that typists can make excellent wives.

Keeping up workplace appearances

Woman's Weekly's employment discourses demonstrate acute awareness of readers' lower-middle-class desire to distinguish themselves from working-class women. The business plans for hairdressers, teashop owners, and dressmakers, that presumably target women in need of long-term employment, ensure that the latter do not lose status by working for a living. Other "Chats" help younger readers into jobs that will preserve (or enhance) their class status whilst they wait to marry. Whilst occupations requiring a university education are absent from the magazine's employment advice columns, most require a reasonable level of

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., lines 235-242.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., lines 255-256.

literacy and none involve heavy manual labour.¹¹¹ “A good accent is essential” for telephonists, the implication being that “The London Telephone Service” is an exclusively middle-class environment;¹¹² reasonably well-paid, secure, and clean, clerical occupations traditionally attracted middle-class women, and in this respect “Chats on Careers” promoting clerical work and office conduct columns classify *Woman’s Weekly*’s working readers as middle class by implication.¹¹³ It would be incorrect to assume that *Woman’s Weekly* clerical workers are middle class by background, however: following the war, increasing numbers of working-class girls entered clerical employment, and enjoyed a rise in status through earning higher wages than their peers.¹¹⁴ Read by socially aspirant working-class typists or would-be typists, *Woman’s Weekly*’s office conduct advice may therefore function as class fantasy literature, or ensure that working-class readers maintain ‘middle class’ behavioural standards in the workplace. “Chats” also promotes jobs in domestic service however, addressing *Woman’s Weekly*’s working-class readers more explicitly. A “Lady’s Maid” is renamed “companion-maid” and promised access to her mistress’ exalted social circle in

¹¹¹ None of the *Woman’s Weekly* magazines surveyed for this thesis discuss their readers’ schooling directly, perhaps to avoid bracketing them openly alongside women whose families could not afford for them to remain in education beyond the school leaving age. But despite having probably left school at twelve (fourteen after 1921 and fifteen after 1947), *Woman’s Weekly* typists would have attended “a brief period of training” for clerical work, a factor distinguishing them and their families from those whose circumstances precluded non-compulsory education for which they would have had to pay (Stephanie Spencer, *Gender, Work and Education in Britain in the 1950s* [Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005], 6). By the late 1940s, “many clerical jobs” required the School Certificate, taken at sixteen (Selina Todd, *Young Women, Work, and Family in England 1918-1950* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005], 42). Thus, whilst *Woman’s Weekly* readers manifestly did not attend university, those who worked as typists were probably educated to a higher level than women from the poorest backgrounds.

¹¹² “Chats on Careers: The London Telephone Service,” WW 30 Aug 1919, 166.

¹¹³ Todd, *Young Women*, 42.

¹¹⁴ Elizabeth Roberts, *Woman’s Work, 1840-1940* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988), 28.

return for her confidential services which, including telephoning and letter-writing, encompass those of a (middle-class) secretary;¹¹⁵ in addition to assisting with domestic chores, a “companion-help” lives with her employers, eats at their table, holidays with them, helps entertain their guests, and meets prospective husbands with middle-class jobs.¹¹⁶ By thus glamorising domestic service, these “Chats” are presumably responding to the growing Servant Problem, but by framing servants’ positions as means of gaining promotion into the middle classes, they acknowledge socially aspirant working-class readers’ eagerness to distance themselves from their working-class origins.

Maintaining middle-class levels of sexual respectability is clearly of paramount importance to *Woman’s Weekly*’s working readers. “Chats” assures potential florists and machine embroidresses that these occupations are “respectable” and observes that the bar of a theatre is of “a superior type”.¹¹⁷ More explicitly, conduct column “The Man With The Misleading Manner: An Intimate Talk to the Little Girl who weaves Day-Dreams Round the Head of the Office” warns typists against office flirtations with male colleagues.¹¹⁸ The latter piece of advice is, however, undermined by the fictional context in which it is delivered: as though ignoring its injunction to “keep the personal note out of the office”, *Woman’s Weekly* workplace romance stories portray the establishment as a husband-hunting ground.¹¹⁹ Whilst the coexistence of these contradictory discourses highlights the magazine’s heterogeneity, the impression given by the

¹¹⁵ “Chats on Careers: The Lady’s Maid,” WW 28 Jun 1919, 517.

¹¹⁶ “Chats on Careers: The Companion-Help,” WW 25 Oct 1919, 335.

¹¹⁷ “Chats on Careers: The Florist,” WW 17 May 1919, 392; “Chats on Careers: The Machine Embroidress,” WW 4 Oct 1919, 274; “Chats on Careers: Theatre Life For Women,” WW 1 Nov 1919, 364.

¹¹⁸ “The Man With The Misleading Manner,” WW 14 Dec 1918, 377.

¹¹⁹ “The Man,” 377.

conduct column is that it feels the need to warn readers of the potentially damaging effects of its own fiction. Other conduct columns stress the importance of respectable domestic circumstances. Ideally, working daughters lived with their parents;¹²⁰ should this be impractical, “Chats” recognises that their lodgings must be as home-like as possible, assuring readers, and readers’ mothers, that “The Shop Girl” in London will lodge with other girls in a ‘home’ overseen by a “motherly housekeeper [who] looks after the catering and welfare of her big family”.¹²¹ These desirable establishments even ensure that residents occupy their leisure hours respectably, by participating in middle-class activities such as “tennis [...] winter dances, whist drives, and outings up the river”.¹²² These activities, enabling young people to socialise in middle-class settings, may also give working readers, or readers’ daughters, opportunities to marry into middle-class society. Where respectable company lodgings are unavailable, *Woman’s Weekly* itself acts as chaperone. After offering advice on boarding-house curfews, landladies, and giving notice, “The Girl ‘In Digs’” concludes that the “average girl never realises what the comforts of home really mean, and what a good mother can be to one, till she is compelled to ‘go into lodgings’ after taking a situation in a strange town”.¹²³ Positioning itself as a replacement for a young unmarried woman’s traditional advisor, this column reassures mothers with the implication that, if their daughters read *Woman’s Weekly* whilst they are away from home, they will remain in respectable hands.

¹²⁰ Todd, “You’d the Feeling,” 133-134.

¹²¹ “Chats on Careers: The Shop Girl,” WW 27 Sept 1919, 254.

¹²² “The Shop Girl,” 254.

¹²³ “The Girl ‘In Digs’,” WW 22 Feb 1919, 135.

More obliquely, *Woman's Weekly* attempts to preserve its working readers' middle-class status by persuading them to remain out of paid employment after they marry. That this attempt is made towards the end of the year following the Armistice is a further indication that the magazine is treating working readers with growing conservatism, for, at the beginning of the year, a working wife is presented as a positive role model. Printed in January 1919, discussion feature "The Married Woman in Business" observes that many wives who took on wartime clerical work are keeping their jobs despite their husbands' demobilisation, motivated by a legitimate desire for professional fulfilment. As a male chief clerk declares of the article's married, working subject, "I can understand that a smart girl like that doesn't want to stay at home making puddings and pies [...] she puts [my letters] together excellently".¹²⁴ Praising the working wife's "well dressed and prosperous" appearance and generous domestic hospitality, the article highlights the benefits of a dual income to a married couple.¹²⁵ In thus citing professional fulfilment and a desire to raise her family's status as this wife's incentives to work, "The Married Woman In Business" anticipates arguments in favour of working wives addressed by post-Second World War *Woman's Weekly* (see Chapters Five and Six). When the debate resurfaces nine months later however, its outcome is radically different. The writer of "Should A Woman Keep Her Job After Marriage?" exposes herself as selfish and materialistic by revealing that, far from working (as she claims) so that she and her husband can enjoy a modest degree of comfort during a time of economic hardship, she spends her earnings on luxuries ("fancy having to make

¹²⁴ "The Married Woman In Business," WW 18 Jan 1919, 37.

¹²⁵ "The Married Woman," 37.

my dress last two or three seasons!"); declaring that she works shorter hours than her husband who, like her, is happy to eat at restaurants, and that she can afford to employ a charwoman, she indicates that her lifestyle is tenable only because of her generous salary, short working day, convenient catering arrangements, and evident lack of children.¹²⁶ The following week, "Woman's Work After Marriage" dismantles her case by branding wives who "neglect [...] home and husband" to "earn money for unnecessary luxuries and pleasure" as "selfish" and pointing out that, in any case, their expenses and the cost of employing "daily helpers" will account for their earnings.¹²⁷ Accusing working wives of neglecting their household duties, "Woman's Work After Marriage" recycles pre-war criticism of women who worked in paid employment after marriage;¹²⁸ again, advice columns in post-Second World War *Woman's Weekly* will argue that married women's earnings are absorbed by the extra expenses incurred by their decision to remain in paid employment. In any case, unspoken class anxieties may underpin this U-turn in attitude towards working wives. In early twentieth-century British society, poverty was a prime factor motivating wives to find paid employment:¹²⁹ by working outside her home, a wife may imply that her family belongs to this low socio-economic group. The negativity expressed by these articles towards working wives points to a readership that is eager to define itself as middle class by not working in paid employment once married.

Passing as leisure class?

¹²⁶ "Should A Woman Keep Her Job After Marriage?" *WW* 27 Sept 1919, 263.

¹²⁷ "Woman's Work After Marriage," *WW* 4 Oct 1919, 277.

¹²⁸ Roberts, *Work*, 35.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 6, 37; Joan Wallach Scott and Louise A. Tilly, *Women, Work and Family* (London: Routledge, 1989), 195.

Although *Woman's Weekly* encourages its working readers to give up paid work after they marry, its domestic advice discourses urge them not to cease productivity. Indeed, domestic productivity will emerge as one of *Woman's Weekly* readers' distinctively lower-middle-class characteristics throughout the period explored by this study. Between November 1918 and November 1919, domestic columnists Florence Stacpoole, Fanny Bennett, and "Cecile" offer childcare, gardening, and cookery advice respectively. Cecile also responds to readers' cleaning queries, 'do-it-yourself' column "The Little Home" offers home decorating and furnishing advice, and dressmaking, knitting, and crochet features help readers to clothe themselves and their children. Unlike upmarket publication *The Lady*, whose domestic advice is aimed at mistresses of servants or dispensed on the understanding that mistresses are doing their own housework in their servants' temporary (war-related) absence,¹³⁰ *Woman's Weekly* does not assume that its readers can afford to employ domestic help. Servants receive no mention by advice columnists, who address correspondents and readers directly, assuming that they perform their own domestic chores, and Cecile's recipes assume a good level of culinary expertise.¹³¹ Later in the interwar period, this absence of pretence surrounding servants will distinguish lower-middle-class *Woman's Weekly* from middle-middle-class domestic publication *Good Housekeeping*, launched in 1922; during 1918 and 1919, *Woman's Weekly*'s construction of its readers' openly servantless status begins to establish domestic productivity as, paradoxically, criteria with which they can claim class

¹³⁰ G. C. B., "Hints For Sunday's Supper," *TL* 10 Apr 1919, 378; C. B., "Spring Cleaning," *TL* 10 Apr 1919, 396.

¹³¹ A "Baked Apple Roll" recipe assumes its users are able to make shortcrust pastry without instructions (Cecile, "My Special Apple Recipes," *WW* 22 Mar 1919, 228).

superiority to leisured housewives throughout the period. Conflicting with romances of upward mobility in the magazine, *Woman's Weekly* readers' pride in their status as domestic producers contributes to the magazine's conflicting relationship with leisure-class culture during the year following the Armistice. As later chapters will argue, conflicting desires to simultaneously acquire and reject leisure-class culture constitute another key distinction of its lower-middle-class culture during the four decades covered by this study.

Woman's Weekly's focus on domestic productivity distinguishes the magazine from newsstand rivals *Peg's Paper*, *My Weekly*, and *People's Friend* between November 1918 and November 1919. Adverts for foodstuffs¹³² aside, practical domestic advice is absent from *Peg's Paper*, whose 'editor' states explicitly that she expects readers to use the magazine to escape from their workaday lives;¹³³ although *My Weekly* and *People's Friend* publish regular dressmaking features,¹³⁴ crochet projects,¹³⁵ housework advice,¹³⁶ and, in the case of *People's Friend*, recipes,¹³⁷ the bulk of their copy space is given to fiction, which suggests that their primary concern is to help readers escape rather than perform household tasks. Whilst the provision of escapism through fiction is

¹³² E.g. advert, "Egall" dried eggs, *PP* 18 Sept 1919, iii; advert, "Fry's" chocolate, *PP* 11 Sept 1919, bc; advert, "Fry's" cocoa, *PP* 13 Nov 1919, ii.

¹³³ "I want to imagine you reading these stories after you've finished your work" (Peg, "Let's be Pals," *PP* 15 May 1919, 1).

¹³⁴ The Dress Expert, "A Novelty in Wraps," *MW* w/e 11 Jan 1919, 27; The Dress Expert, "The 'Swiss' Set," w/e *MW* 29 Mar 1919, 197; Lizette, "Exclusive Styles for Early Summer," *PF* 7 Jun 1919, 292-293; Lizette, "Smart Suits for Bathers," *PF* 14 Jun 1919, 308-309.

¹³⁵ "Odd Moment Crochet," *MW* w/e 25 Jan 1919, 57; "'Shell' Lace," *MW* w/e 30 Aug 1919, 162; "The Lonsdale Lace," *PF* 7 Jun 1919, 296; "Olivette Insertion," *PF* 14 Jun 1919, 314.

¹³⁶ "Things To Remember," *MW* w/e 28 Jun 1919, 430; "You Might Try," *MW* w/e 30 Aug 1919, 162; Eleanor, "Laundry Tips," *PF* 7 Jun 1919, 296.

¹³⁷ Kitty, "Kitty's Kitchen Club," *PF* 7 Jun 1919, 298; Kitty, "Summer Soups," *PF* 14 Jun 1919, 314.

clearly an important element of *Woman's Weekly*, the magazine's stronger emphasis on housework, which makes it a forerunner of the practical, 'domestic manual' publications such as *Good Housekeeping*, *Woman's Own*, and *Woman* that were launched for the middle-class market during the 1920s and 1930s, targets readers with a keener perceived interest in domestic productivity than readers of *My Weekly* and *Peg's Paper*.

IMAGES DELETED

Fig. 6. Positive images of housework (Clockwise from top left: Fanny Bennett, "Our Weekly Gardening," WW 12 Jul 1919, 39; Cecile, "Strawberries and Gooseberries," WW 28 Jun 1919, 530; "For Mother And Home," WW 21 Jun 1919, 511).

Positive images of domestic productivity in *Woman's Weekly* present servantless housewifery as enjoyable, despite evidence that readers on low incomes are experiencing domestic privations during the aftermath of war. This evidence emerges in Cecile's recipes, which tackle continuing food shortages and rationing¹³⁸ with injunctions against waste,¹³⁹ ingenious use of substitutes,¹⁴⁰ and recipes for 'mock' foods.¹⁴¹ Echoing Cecile, craft projects suggest

¹³⁸ Rationing ended in 1921 (Nicola Humble, *Culinary Pleasures: Cookbooks and the Transformation of British Food* [London: Faber and Faber Ltd, 2005], 47).

¹³⁹ Left-over curry and cheese on toast make "A Tempting Supper" (Cecile, "Make The Best Of Your Cheese," WW 15 Feb 1919, 130).

¹⁴⁰ Lentils can bulk out a "Baked Fish Mould" (Cecile, "Recipes Worth Trying!" WW 1 Mar 1919, 151).

¹⁴¹ Cubes of beef wrapped in bacon and stewed with onions, capers, lemon peel, and vinegar make convincing "Mock Game" (Cecile, "Recipes Specially Asked For," WW 4 Jan 1919, p. 13).

substituting materials and using up scraps;¹⁴² one-off waste-avoidance feature “Don’t Discard Your Empty Tins” instructs readers to convert empty food tins into colanders, soap dishes, children’s stools, rolling pins, even an “oven” for cooking on a stovetop or before a fire.¹⁴³ Launched on 7 June 1919, “The Little Home” encourages readers to furnish their homes using recycled materials, by making a corner seat from two packing cases covered with cretonne stuffed with rags and shredded paper, for example, and by converting deckchairs into bedroom chairs.¹⁴⁴ Despite these indications that *Woman’s Weekly* readers are coping with limited budgets and resources, images of servantless housewifery in the magazine are overwhelmingly positive. Drawings illustrating domestic advice columns show housewives cheerfully gardening, cooking, and mothering (Fig. 6), and “The Little Home” even presents ‘making-do’ as an adventure – “it is much more exciting to make do with home-made oddments”.¹⁴⁵ Whilst this positivity probably constitutes an attempt at palliating evident domestic hardships, images of happy housewives also encourage readers to take pride in their domestic work and their status as domestic producers. Unlike the readers constructed by *The Lady*, *Woman’s Weekly*’s constructed readers seem wholly unembarrassed by their inability to procure domestic help.

The distinctive pride in performing housework shown by *Woman’s Weekly*’s constructed readers contributes to a distinctive ambivalence towards leisure-class status. On the one hand, they seem to desire the material trappings

¹⁴² “A Knitted Silk Jumper” can also be made from wool (Mrs Arnold, “A Knitted Silk Jumper,” WW 20 Sept 1919, 240); “Attractive Frames Made With Wallpaper” use up waste cardboard (“Attractive Frames Made With Wallpaper,” WW 18 Jan 1919, 34); “New Bags” use up waste cloth (“New Bags,” WW 26 Jul 1919, 69).

¹⁴³ “Don’t Discard Your Empty Tins,” WW 23 Nov 1918, 328.

¹⁴⁴ E.g. “The Little Home,” WW 7 Jun 1919, 452; “The Little Home,” WW 19 Jul 1919, 56.

¹⁴⁵ “The Little Home,” WW 7 Jun 1919, 452.

of leisure, fine clothes, and the latest music and dances modelled by Society figures; on the other, they disapprove strongly of certain moral values that these trappings apparently represent. Faye Hammill's analysis of sophistication during the interwar period offers a framework for exploring this mixture of desire and disapproval during 1918 and 1919. Sophistication, Hammill argues, was a hugely ambivalent term during the 1920s and 1930s, when its use as both praise and pejorative, often within the same text, marked a shift from the dangerous connotations it held during the nineteenth century to its use as a term of approbation during the later twentieth century.¹⁴⁶ Sophistication emerges on two levels, "in the context of fashion" (materially, in dress or etiquette) and "in relation to morality and values";¹⁴⁷ the former may signify the latter, which – often associated with hedonism and extravagance, and "usually opposed to sexual continence, thrift, productiveness and the work ethic"¹⁴⁸ – runs counter to *Woman's Weekly's* emphases on sexual respectability and domestic productivity. Yet both forms of sophistication appear in *Woman's Weekly's* romance narratives of class elevation. Whilst fashion and gossip discourses make material sophistication desirable as a leisure-class cultural distinction, conduct columns and fiction suggest that to achieve class elevation through marriage, readers should reject material sophistication as a signifier of sexual immorality. Material sophistication is presented to *Woman's Weekly* readers in two forms, fake and genuine. Their ability to distinguish between fake and genuine distances them,

¹⁴⁶ Faye Hammill, *Sophistication: A Literary and Cultural History* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010), 128-129.

¹⁴⁷ Hammill, *Sophistication*, 4.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

and their culture, from the lower middle classes described by Crosland and Bourdieu, and – crucially – they disapprove of both forms of sophistication.

Woman's Weekly readers' desire to acquire leisure-class material distinctions is fuelled and fulfilled by The London Girl, who keeps them abreast of the latest metropolitan trends in her weekly "Whispers" column. Modelled by Society, with whom 'she' claims to mingle in restaurants, fashion salons, nightclubs, theatres, and even their own homes, the latest fashions in dress, music, dance, and lifestyle signify membership of a sophisticated leisured elite and, consequently, are desired by readers aspiring to join their ranks. By disseminating leisure-class culture among *Woman's Weekly's* lower-class readers, The London Girl participates in the democratisation of class distinctions identified by Orwell in interwar Britain;¹⁴⁹ countering Orwell however, her project is manifestly undemocratic. Whereas Orwell believed that the democratisation of class distinctions was erasing social class, The London Girl preserves the existing class structure. Placed respectfully at the top of each column in which they appear, royalty are fashion's standard-bearers, followed by lesser aristocrats and other celebrities, whose clothing and activities are made desirable, "Whispers" implies, by their social standing. In thus preserving the leisure classes' cultural hegemony, The London Girl ratifies Aldous Huxley's belief in gossip columns' inherent conservatism: by maintaining the upper classes' "feudal" dominance of social tastes, they enable them to admire

¹⁴⁹ George Orwell, "England Your England," *The Lion and the Unicorn: Socialism and the English Genius* (London: Martin Secker & Warburg Ltd, 2001 [1941]), 272-273.

themselves and be admired by their inferiors who, desiring to enter their ranks, have no wish to dismantle the hierarchy they hope to ascend.¹⁵⁰

The London Girl brings leisure-class culture within *Woman's Weekly* readers' reach by assuming that they possess the economic means to participate in her glittering subjects' sophisticated lifestyles. Her assumption is implied in declarations that to "be up to the mode one simply must wear a velvet hat" and that "[e]verybody is seeking gramophones. We find them so useful when we push back the furniture in the drawing-room and indulge in a [...] dance".¹⁵¹ "Everybody" implies Society and "we" includes The London Girl and *Woman's Weekly* readers, assumed able to afford houses with spacious drawing rooms as well as gramophones – her assumption is revealed as fantasy, however, by its manifest unaffordability. Adverts for modish velvet hats and gramophones, which appear in upmarket publication *The Lady*, are absent from *Woman's Weekly* during 1918 and 1919; instead, readers learn how to renovate their existing headgear by making "New Fancy Hatpins" out of ribbons, beads, silver paper, and paint, and to play piano arrangements of "The Latest 'Jazz' Novelties".¹⁵² By teaching readers to fashion the latest luxury accessories from scraps in their piecebags, *Woman's Weekly's* craft columns support Crosland and Bourdieu's claims that lower-middle-class culture is a cheap, inauthentic version of leisure-class culture – however these columns' presumption that readers are able to distinguish between ersatz and genuine leisure-class cultural forms does not tally with Crosland and Bourdieu's claims that lower-middle-class

¹⁵⁰ Aldous Huxley, "English Snobbery," in *The Olive Tree and Other Essays*, by Aldous Huxley (London: Chatto & Windus, 1936), 117-121.

¹⁵¹ The London Girl, "Whispers," WW 18 Oct 1919, 309; TLG "Whispers," WW 19 Apr 1919, 297.

¹⁵² "New Fancy Hatpins," WW 8 Feb 1919, 97; "The Latest 'Jazz' Novelties," WW 1 Mar 1919, fc.

individuals lack the knowledge to make that distinction for themselves, and that they, and the culture's producers, accept a middlebrow cultural "bluff" that the 'leisure-class' culture they are consuming/producing is authentic. *Woman's Weekly's* craft columns reject this bluff, by openly acknowledging that they are showing readers how to make budget reproductions of expensive leisure-class commodities. Their declarations that shop-bought tassels are "beyond the average girl's purse" and that "[n]ever were beads so costly as they are this season" reveal both magazine and readers' awareness that these cheap reproductions are *not* genuine leisure-class trimmings:¹⁵³ *Woman's Weekly's* 1918-1919 readers therefore challenge Crosland and Bourdieu's assumption that the lower middle classes are socially aspirant but unwitting consumers of an ersatz culture.

The implied rejection of middlebrow bluffing on *Woman's Weekly's* craft pages is echoed in the magazine's disapproval of class pretension as a means of social climbing. This disapproval is rooted in its championship of sexual respectability: in a society in which women achieve upward class mobility through marriage, the affectation of material sophistication in order to 'seduce' a superior husband may, conduct columns and fictional romances indicate, connote undesirable sexual sophistication. "Jazzing Through Life" censures flirts who prefer tennis to darning, wear high heels and silk stockings in the office, and "jazz" around ballrooms and golf links in search of male conquests – in objecting to office girls who shirk their domestic and professional responsibilities in their attempts to marry up, this conduct column censures the pretence of leisured

¹⁵³ "Tassels As Trimmings," WW 1 Feb 1919, 75; "Bead Economy," WW 15 Mar 1919, 194.

sophistication as a class lever.¹⁵⁴ This column's attitude is made to appear desirable by *Woman's Weekly* romance heroines who marry up without concealing their lower-class origins. Billeted with typist Joan and her mother, Major Matheson is fully aware of the former's class status when he proposes;¹⁵⁵ Captain Blair Douglas proposes to typist Rosie whilst she is wearing her "business" clothes.¹⁵⁶ One heroine who attempts to attract male attention by passing as leisure-class is punished: lady's companion Avenal adapts her dance frock to make it appear more expensive, but 'seduces' the villain instead of the hero and must undergo the shame of learning that Jack Bentley proposed only because he believed that she would inherit her elderly cousin's fortune before being united with wealthy Blake Hunston, who prefers her without finery.¹⁵⁷ Ironically, by updating her frock Avenal follows advice given by *Woman's Weekly*'s dressmaking features, which encourage readers to renovate old garments to match the latest styles.¹⁵⁸ Her mistake lies in her use of the updated frock to compete with sophisticated leisure-class rivals for male attention, behaviour that endangers her sexual respectability.

Woman's Weekly readers' disapproval of flirts who 'dress up' in order to marry up confirms their superiority to women who affect class pretensions in order to elevate their status. Their superiority to genuine leisure-class sophistication is confirmed in romance "Rosemary Married" which, comparison with Daphne du Maurier's 1938 novel *Rebecca* suggests, champions the lower middle classes' growing cultural prominence at the beginning of the interwar

¹⁵⁴ "Jazzing Through Life," WW 5 Jul 1919, 5.

¹⁵⁵ Claire Thornton, "Joan And The Ogre," WW 16 Nov 1918, 316-317.

¹⁵⁶ "Romance in a Crowded Bus," WW 23 Nov 1918, 325-326.

¹⁵⁷ Winifred Carter, "The Plain Miss Day," WW 26 Jul 1919, 71-74.

¹⁵⁸ "Peace Frocks from War Uniforms," WW 30 Aug 1919, 177.

period. Wealthy Charlie fell for lower-middle-class Rosemary whilst watching her sweep the steps of the cottage she shared with her sisters, a teacher and clerical worker, for whom she kept house. His choice of bride, a servantless ‘housewife’ rather than the leisure-class woman his wealth and position could presumably have afforded, confirms the ‘superiority’ of *Woman’s Weekly’s* lower-middle-class culture of domestic productivity. Several months after their marriage however, Rosemary, who retains her lower-middle-class outlook by refusing to employ a lady’s maid, is consumed by jealousy and self-doubt when Charlie’s sophisticated aristocratic cousin Denise, a baron’s widow, visits: drawing negative comparisons between Denise’s chiffon and rouge and her own “flowered muslin” and childish braids, she decides that Charlie made a mistake in marrying his class inferior. Discovering that Charlie, disguised as their chauffeur, has taken Denise to visit their aristocratic neighbours Lord and Lady Dennison, Rosemary concludes that the cousins are having an affair and runs away; finding her, Charlie explains that, far from being attracted by Denise’s sophistication, he is ashamed of her posing and extravagance, and disguised himself as the chauffeur to prevent her elopement with the Dennison’s profligate son. Furthermore, Lady Dennison wishes to meet Rosemary, confirming that her refusal to drop her lower-middle-class outlook has gained her acceptance into leisure-class society.¹⁵⁹ Remaining lower middle class as she achieves leisure-class status, Rosemary raises the status of lower-middle-class culture.

Pitting a newly married lower-middle-class heroine against a sophisticated leisure-class love-rival, “Rosemary Married” prefigures Daphne du Maurier’s 1938 novel *Rebecca*, which records the struggle of a gauche former

¹⁵⁹ Mary Fortune Clegg, “Rosemary Married,” *WW* 6 Aug 1919, 113-116.

lady's companion to live up to the standards set by her aristocratic husband Maxim de Winter's previous wife, Rebecca. Dead, Rebecca nevertheless poses a formidable threat to the nameless heroine who, preferring hand-knits to *haute couture*, incapable of commanding servants, and apt to commit social *faux pas* that reveal her lowly background, compares herself unfavourably to her beautiful, accomplished predecessor; her namelessness highlights her inability to consolidate her position in her husband's society. After incurring Maxim's wrath by mistakenly dressing as 'Rebecca' for a fancy-dress ball, she concedes defeat and offers to live as his companion rather than his wife. Although Maxim's eventual love-declaration and confession that his previous marriage was a sham owing to Rebecca's sexual corruption confirm the lower-middle-class heroine's moral superiority to her leisure-class rival, unlike Rosemary she does not gain access to leisure-class society on its strength: Maxim is exposed as a criminal and, although he is acquitted, the couple are forced to live 'happily ever after' in social and geographical exile, the heroine experiencing British leisure-class culture vicariously, in magazines and newspapers. Manderley, Maxim's stately home, burns down, reinforcing the heroine's exclusion from his class.¹⁶⁰ Both "Rosemary Married" and *Rebecca* classify lower-middle-class heroines as morally superior to their sexually sophisticated leisure-class rivals and, by marrying each to a leisure-class hero, both enact the interwar lower middle classes' increasing social prominence. However whereas *Rebecca* puts leisure-class culture safely beyond the lower middle classes' reach, "Rosemary Married" welcomes them into leisure-class society. Published in a lower-middle-class

¹⁶⁰ Daphne du Maurier, *Rebecca* (London: Reader's Digest Association, 1997 [1938]).

magazine, “Rosemary Married” is a ringing endorsement of lower-middle-class culture.

Conclusion

Between November 1918 and November 1919, *Woman's Weekly* aims its lower-middle-class culture at a mixed-age readership of lower-class housewives and paid workers, some of which are working class and all of which aspire towards middle-class status. Their desire to acquire leisure-class cultural distinctions as proof of successful upward mobility conflicts, however, with the magazine's rejection of class pretensions and assertion of lower-middle-class moral superiority to the leisure classes; as the following chapters will argue, these distinctions continue to resurface during later years surveyed by this study.

During 1918 and 1919, lower-middle-class romance heroines' successful integration into leisure-class society confirms, in fantasy, upper-middle-class fears that lower-middle-class culture will overwhelm their own, and is indicative of growth in the lower middle classes' social confidence. Chapter Two will suggest that this growth in confidence is more marked during 1928, when romance fiction in *Woman's Weekly* champions self-made heroes who earn rather than inherit professional and class promotion with heroines' support; their economic and social 'coming of age' continues the magazine's rehabilitation of physically and psychologically wounded post-First World War masculinity.

Although a drop in features aimed at working readers will appear to uphold Beddoe's assertion that middle-class women retreated back into the domestic sphere during the interwar period, typists remain visible, indicating that working in paid employment between school and marriage continues to be a rite of

passage for lower-middle-class women, and that *Woman's Weekly's* support of its working readers remains constant. It begins, however, by discussing the domestic magazine's relations with current affairs.

Chapter Two: Not Working Class (but Not Yet Middle Class)

1928

1928 is a milestone year in women's history. Under the terms of the Representation of the People (Equal Franchise) Act, made law on 2 July, all British citizens over the age of twenty-one became eligible to vote in general elections: for the first time, women had the same voting rights as men. *Woman's Weekly* seems nonplussed by this momentous change to Britain's electoral constitution however, referring to the so-called "flapper vote" only once and briefly, in a conduct column suggesting that it might be deployed as a conversation topic by anyone struggling to make small talk at a party.¹ This lack of interest in women's altered citizenship perhaps seems odd in a publication targeting a female readership. Possible explanations could be a desire to avoid dividing or alienating readers on political grounds, or disapproval of the Act itself. The *Daily Mail*, one of *Woman's Weekly*'s sister publications in the Harmsworth media empire, opposed the 1928 Act because it would enfranchise flappers, "young, unmarried" women who supposedly knew nothing of politics² – the conduct column's reference to the "flapper vote" hints that it may share the newspaper's reservations, although as the term is included alongside books, plays, and the cinema in a list of conversational gambits it is impossible to gauge whether or not it is being used pejoratively. A more likely explanation perhaps is that *Woman's Weekly* is just not interested in governmental politics, preferring to offer its domestic interior as space into which readers can escape from current

¹ "Don't Be Shy," WW 4 Aug 1928, 186.

² Harold L. Smith, *The British Women's Suffrage Campaign 1866-1928* (Harlow: Pearson Education Ltd, 2010), 105.

affairs: they can, and probably do, read about politics elsewhere. Remaining apolitical may be commercially expedient, but inasmuch as the absence of political debate from *Woman's Weekly* reinforces the Victorian ideal of the domestic sphere as a sanctuary from public life, it reinforces *Woman's Weekly's* conservative image. In this respect the magazine is no different to comparative titles *Peg's Paper* and *My Weekly*, which also take little obvious interest in current affairs.

Pertinently to the principal theme of this thesis, *Woman's Weekly's* omission of the "flapper vote" during 1928 provides an important clue to its readers' class identity. British women had been eligible to vote in parliamentary elections since 1918, when the Representation of the People Act enfranchised those over thirty who were university educated, or who owned or occupied land or property worth at least £5 per year (or whose husbands met these economic conditions); included to calm anti-suffragists' fears that full women's suffrage would result in a majority of female voters,³ these age and property qualifications would presumably have excluded many of *Woman's Weekly's* 1918 readers who, as Chapter One argues, were assumed not to have been university educated and to be relatively badly off. Between November 1918 and November 1919, the publication's engagement with women's suffrage was virtually as limited as it is in 1928, and its reticence was almost certainly as much a tacit admission of readers' low socio-economic status as of their desire to escape current affairs. The first general election in which women were eligible to vote was held on 14 December 1918. *Woman's Weekly* responded one month later, with a short

³ Sue Bruley, *Women in Britain Since 1900* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1999), 51.

editorial belatedly explaining the voter registration procedure: relating a conversation with a woman who, although qualified, forgot to register, the “Editress” tactfully blames readers’ current disenfranchisement on an error of self-administration, and looks forward to the next election, when, she anticipates, they will be eligible to vote.⁴ *Woman’s Weekly*’s apparent disinterest in the 1918 enfranchisement of wealthy and well-educated women is thus a tactic for evading its own readers’ disenfranchisement. Given after the election, instructions for registering to vote are less likely to alienate readers who do not meet the qualifications, and allow the latter to contemplate being elevated into the enfranchised classes by the time the next one is held. During 1928, the magazine’s lack of interest in the “flapper vote” preserves a flattering illusion that its readers are *already* enfranchised, having already met the 1918 Act’s property, marital, or educational qualifications. Implicitly, *Woman’s Weekly*’s virtual failure to acknowledge that a fundamental change to the political status of British women took place during 1928 classifies its readers during that year as members of the better-off middle classes.

Reflecting their disinterest in women’s suffrage, *Woman’s Weekly* readers’ lower-middle-class identity is defined partly by what they are not during 1928. Materially better off than they were during 1918 and 1919, and expecting their incomes to keep rising, they remain eager to distinguish themselves from the working classes – but although their outlook is becoming more middle class, they cannot yet afford to lead fully middle-class lifestyles. To examine the magazine’s construction of these lifestyles during 1928, this chapter is divided into seven

⁴ The Editress, “Did You Vote?” *WW* 11 Jan 1919, 20.

sections, chosen, again, to reflect the contents of issues published throughout the year. “Rising incomes, rising aspirations” examines *Woman’s Weekly* readers’ material status and consumption habits, which distinguish them from working-class and middle-middle-class publications’ readerships, and the magazine’s holiday pages, which suggest that their outlook is becoming increasingly middle class. “Not in front of the servants” examines *Woman’s Weekly*’s conduct and etiquette columns, which confront readers’ status anxieties surrounding the working classes. “Romances of becoming middle class” examines the appeal of lower-middle-class masculine romances of social elevation, and “Boys to men” links upwardly mobile heroes to masculinity’s continued post-war rehabilitation. “Ladies of leisure” addresses the workaday lives of single and married readers; finally, “Happy housewife heroines?” reveals that *Woman’s Weekly* offers its readers space in which to debate the domestic identities it constructs for them. Again, I establish *Woman’s Weekly*’s uniquely lower-middle-class status using comparisons to other titles – these include *Peg’s Paper*, *My Weekly*, and *Good Housekeeping*, the monthly domestic glossy launched in 1922 for which *Woman’s Weekly* is regarded a forerunner.⁵ Throughout, readers’ lower-middle-class status remains neither/nor: not working class, but not yet comfortably middle class, they occupy a status of transition.

Rising incomes, rising aspirations

Commensurate with the increasing prosperity of the interwar lower middle classes, the material circumstances of *Woman’s Weekly*’s 1928 readers are

⁵ Ros Ballaster, et al., *Women’s Worlds: Ideology, Femininity and Women’s Magazines* (London: Macmillan Education, 1991), 83.

assumed to have improved since 1918 and 1919. Advertisements offer a range of commodities geared towards the production and consumption of leisure: ready-made foods and cleaning products⁶ promise to reduce the amount of time housewives spend doing domestic chores, and cosmetics, fiction-heavy Amalgamated Press publications, and even a gramophone testify to the free time they will acquire with these purchases.⁷ Thanks to improvements in market research techniques, by the late 1920s magazine advertisements were becoming an increasingly reliable barometer of their target readers' economic circumstances⁸ – *Woman's Weekly's* adverts are thus an increasingly valid measure of the status and aspirations of its target readers, relative to the status and aspirations of readers targeted by other publications. Adverts promoting the same cheap cosmetics and medical remedies in *Woman's Weekly*, *My Weekly*, and *Peg's Paper* indicate that the three publications still target readers from similar socio-economic demographics;⁹ the continued predominance of adverts for leisure-related products over products associated with housework in *My Weekly* and *Peg's Paper* indicates that these fiction-heavy working-class magazines, still direct competitors with *Woman's Weekly* in terms of cover price (now 2d), continue to support their readers' time off.¹⁰ Assumed able to afford

⁶ E.g. advert, "Chivers'" jellies and marmalade, *WW* 7 Jan 1928, 3; advert, "One-O-One" scouring product, *WW* 7 Apr 1928, 626.

⁷ E.g. advert, "Cutex" cuticle remover, *WW* 7 Apr 1928, 629; advert, "*Violet Magazine*," *WW* 3 Mar 1928, 402; advert, "Fullotone" gramophone, *WW* 3 Mar 1928, 412.

⁸ Terry R. Nevett, *Advertising in Britain: A History* (London: Heinemann, 1982), 150.

⁹ E.g. Poudre Tokalon face powder (*WW* 7 Apr 1928, 639; *MW* 8 May 1928, 533; *PP* 3 Apr 1928, 23) and Veet hair removal cream (*WW* 7 Jul 1928, 36; *MW* 7 Jul 1928, 28; *PP* 3 Jul 1928, 27); Zox headache treatment (*WW* 7 Jan 1928, 22; *MW* 7 Apr 1928, 409; *PP* 6 Nov 1928, 23) and Dr Cassell's tablets for nerves (*WW* 4 Feb 1928, iii; *MW* 3 Mar 1928, 257; *PP* 7 Feb 1928, 23).

¹⁰ Out of 160 adverts in twelve issues of *My Weekly* 1928 (first issue per month), 20 are for goods relating to housework and food (including chocolate) and 78 for

vacuum cleaners, portable wireless sets, golf costumes, and cars, readers of *Good Housekeeping* (cover price: one shilling) are consuming leisure on a markedly more expensive scale: notably better off than *Woman's Weekly* readers, they qualify economically as middle middle class. Whilst improvements in *Woman's Weekly* readers' material circumstances suggest that the lower middle classes have risen in economic status during the last ten years, the continuing similarity of their budget to those of *My Weekly* and *Peg's Paper* readers, and the smallness of their budget relative to that of *Good Housekeeping* readers, indicate that, in economic terms, they retain their close proximity to the working classes and lag behind the middle middle classes. The obvious economic differences between the magazines' readerships confirm the need to distinguish between them ideologically.

Advertisements in *Woman's Weekly* indicate that the magazine's 1928 readers use modes of consumption to distinguish themselves from both the working and the middle middle classes. Thanks to the hire purchase system, which allowed consumers to spread the cost of expensive items by paying for them with a deposit followed by instalments, *Peg's Paper* and *My Weekly* readers are tempted by off-the-peg frocks, wristwatches, wireless sets, gramophones, and bicycles, desirable items that would enable them to appear wealthier than their magazines' low cover price would suggest. *Good Housekeeping* readers are also being encouraged to buy goods 'on the never-never', albeit on much higher terms than those offered by *Peg's Paper* and *My*

fashion, cosmetics, other magazines and technology (gramophones, wireless sets, cameras); out of 218 adverts in twelve issues of *Peg's Paper* 1928 (first issue per month), 12 are for goods relating to housework and food (including chocolate) and 158 for fashion, cosmetics, other magazines and technology.

Weekly. In working-class *Peg's Paper* and *My Weekly*, advertisements for goods on hire purchase are symptomatic of (indeed, partially responsible for) the increasing availability of middle-class material distinctions to members of the working classes; in middle-middle-class *Good Housekeeping*, these adverts hint at the pressure felt by the middle classes to maintain certain lifestyle standards or risk being de-classed by their peers. In contrast to all three readerships, *Woman's Weekly* readers appear much less willing to buy goods on hire purchase – the magazine contains relatively few adverts offering 'easy terms' during 1928. Rather than suggesting that *Woman's Weekly* readers do not desire expensive clothes, accessories, and furnishings however, this lack hints at a sense of discomfort with hire purchase as a means of acquiring them that may stem partly from their disapproval of class pretension. Whilst ownership of expensive commodities was an important status signifier in interwar middle-class circles, hire purchase carried a significant amount of social stigma, being associated with financial imprudence and pretending to a rank beyond one's means¹¹ – distaste for the latter recalls *Woman's Weekly* 1918 and 1919 romances' censure of young women who dress in borrowed finery with a view to claiming social equality with superior prospective husbands. Since *Peg's Paper* and *My Weekly* readers seem willing to use hire purchase, the lack of adverts for goods on easy terms in *Woman's Weekly* distances its readers from working-class individuals, by implying that class pretension is a working-class trait: perhaps owing to the smallness of *Woman's Weekly* readers' incomes, expensive acquisitions risk being assumed automatically to have been paid for by instalments. Relative to

¹¹ Peter Scott, "The Twilight World of Interwar British Hire Purchase," *Past & Present* Volume 177, Number 1 (2002): 206.

Good Housekeeping readers, who are also buying goods on hire purchase, readers of *Woman's Weekly* may feel under less pressure to keep up middle-class lifestyle standards, again because of the smallness of their incomes. Again, lack of class pretension could be a criterion with which they might claim precedence to their economic superiors. Distancing themselves from the working classes, but not yet well-off enough to conform to middle-middle-class consumer expectations, *Woman's Weekly's* 1928 readers rank somewhere between the two in their attitude towards hire purchase.

The appearance in *Woman's Weekly* of holiday features by Barbara Mole, who reviews destinations and answers readers' queries, suggests that the increase in readers' economic prosperity has raised the level of their social aspirations.

Whilst some of Mole's holiday suggestions are relatively modest – a “simple and inexpensive” week's “Caravanning!” and “Free!” activities in London would suit many budgets, for instance¹² – others create the impression of a stratospheric rise in fortune, enabling readers to shop extravagantly in Paris, steam by night train across continental Europe, or cruise around the coast of Norway to the Mediterranean, first class.¹³ In reviewing holidays to suit such a broad range of budgets, Mole creates a culture of social inclusivity on *Woman's Weekly's* travel pages: her suggestions for free holidays prevent some readers from feeling alienated by ensuring that all can participate, and her costlier suggestions imply that the holidaying classes, to which all readers evidently belong, include

¹² Barbara Mole, “Caravanning!” WW 2 Jun 1928, 1007; BM, “What To See In London – Free!” WW 7 Apr 1928, 611-612.

¹³ Barbara Mole, “Paris At Whitsun,” WW 26 May 1928, 963; BM, “Travelling By Night,” WW 19 May 1928, 915-916; BM, “Life On Board Ship,” WW 30 Jun 1928, 1187.

members of a wealthy elite, who also follow *Woman's Weekly's* travel advice. *Woman's Weekly's* low cover price and budget lifestyle content indicate that, for the majority of readers however, Mole's expensive holidays probably function as escapism. She uses mode of address to position readers as central characters of her travel fantasies ("you can visit") and adds a fantasy of realism by flatteringly assuming that their trips "will" take place ("you will see"). By describing what readers will expect, she ensures that even those who cannot afford to take these holidays for real will experience something of their pleasures. In Paris, for instance, they call in at the Louvre and Notre Dame before perusing the "delectable fairylands of the Galeries Lafayette and Printemps" for hats, frocks, jewellery, gloves, and underwear; later, they dine at "marvellous" restaurants before being swept away by "dancing and tableaux of the most astounding beauty and luxurious effects" at the Casino de Paris, Moulin Rouge, or Palace theatres.¹⁴ Illustrations allow readers to visualise themselves in the locales described by Mole (Fig. 7). Underpinning Mole's fantasies is a romance of class promotion: indulging imaginatively in luxury travel accessible only to women with large incomes and plenty of leisure, *Woman's Weekly's* armchair holidaymakers indulge in social as well as geographical escapism.

IMAGES DELETED

Fig. 7. Illustrations allow readers to visualise themselves on holiday (Barbara Mole, "Paris At Whitsun," WW 26 May 1928, 963): readers of a cruise feature can imagine themselves being attended to by 'servants' (BM, "Life On Board Ship," WW 30 Jun 1928, 1187).

¹⁴ Barbara Mole, "Paris At Whitsun," WW 26 May 1928, 963-964.

The presence, form, and function of *Woman's Weekly* readers' holiday fantasies suggest that their social aspirations are becoming increasingly middle class. That they are fantasising about foreign travel, indeed, fantasising about travel at all, distinguishes them from readers of *Peg's Paper* and *My Weekly*. The only (non-story) reference to travel in *Peg's Paper* during 1928 is a Beecham Pills advert, which claims that the product will guard against stomach upsets caused by foreign food;¹⁵ although *My Weekly* dispenses holiday advice, it does not review destinations and states explicitly that not all of its readers will be holidaying away from home.¹⁶ The distinction between *Woman's Weekly*, and *Peg's Paper* and *My Weekly* readers' holiday fantasies hints at a class-based distinction in the source of their similarly sized incomes. Alan Jackson and Ross McKibben both consider having a salaried rather than a waged income a key economic distinction separating the lower middle classes from the working classes, since, Jackson observes, stability of employment, opportunities for promotion, and the means to save allow for a more middle-class outlook.¹⁷ *Woman's Weekly* readers' desire to fantasise about foreign travel may suggest, therefore, that they or their breadwinners are presumed to be earning salaries, and that consequently their incomes, although currently small, are steady and

¹⁵ Advert, "Beecham Pills," *PP* 25 Sept 1928, bc.

¹⁶ A summer frock pattern states that the garment can be worn "for holidays, games, and outings, or just for ordinary everyday occasions" (Lillie London, "A Frock for Every Summer Occasion," *MW* 30 Jun 1928, 763) and advice for avoiding sunburn at the seaside could be followed elsewhere ("Beauty by the Sea," *MW* 30 Jun 1928, 762); the Editor acknowledges that some readers ("owing to various circumstances") are not taking holidays this year (Editress, "Between Ourselves: Holiday Time," *MW* 21 Jul 1928, 68).

¹⁷ Alan Jackson, *The Middle Classes 1900-1950* (Melksham: Redwood Press Ltd, 1991), 12-13; Ross McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures: England 1918-1951* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 44-45.

have the potential to rise. Although unaffordable now, their expensive holiday fantasies could be realised in the future. By contrast, *Peg's Paper* and *My Weekly* readers' apparent disinterest in foreign travel may stem from the presumption that they are living on potentially less reliable waged incomes. That this assumption is not entirely speculative is suggested by *My Weekly*'s "Where the Money Goes" feature, in which readers share the size of their weekly housekeeping budgets and how they spend them: miner's wife Mrs R. L. Butler states that her "husband's pay varies each week"¹⁸ and fitting maker's wife Mrs Millicent Ball declares that her "husband is a piece-worker, he often has a bad week".¹⁹ Foreign travel, for these readers, may be less of a real possibility than it is for those whose husbands earn salaries, and their magazines, recognising this, do not risk alienating them with aspirations that may seem impossible to fulfil on the means available to them. The higher cost of *Woman's Weekly* readers' travel fantasies indicates not that their incomes are greater than those of *Peg's Paper* and *My Weekly* readers, but that they are presumed able to support more expensive lifestyle aspirations. *Woman's Weekly* readers' ambition to holiday abroad suggests, therefore, that their incomes' source may be a steady middle-class salary rather than a less reliable working-class wage.

Distinguishing *Woman's Weekly* readers from readers of working-class *Peg's Paper* and *My Weekly*, Mole's expensive holiday fantasies resemble those consumed by readers of middle-middle-class *Good Housekeeping*, who are also presented with holiday reviews inviting them to travel abroad in fantasy and in

¹⁸ Mrs R. L. Butler, "Where the Money Goes," *MW* 31 Mar 1928, 370.

¹⁹ Mrs Millicent Ball, "Where the Money Goes," *MW* 7 Apr 1928, 400.

actuality.²⁰ Reinforcing the economic superiority of *Good Housekeeping* readers, adverts for foreign travel companies suggest that holidaying abroad, whilst presumably not possible for all, is affordable by some;²¹ by comparison, the absence of travel company adverts from *Woman's Weekly* reinforces the fantasy status of Mole's expensive holidays, and highlights her readers' lower economic status. In fuelling middle-class readers' aspirations to acquire leisure-class distinctions, fantasy travelogues perform a pedagogical function supplementary to their provision of social escapism. Reading them, *Woman's Weekly* and *Good Housekeeping* readers acquire knowledge of leisure-class holiday culture and conduct that they could use to claim superiority to their less knowledgeable peers, perhaps on cheaper versions of leisure-class holidays – *Woman's Weekly* readers could apply instructions for sleeping comfortably on board the Orient Express to Lake Como to a Great Western Railway journey to Cornwall, for instance. To the extent that they thus use cultural knowledge as a class distinction, both sets of readers resemble the “lower-upper-middle classes” described by George Orwell in *The Road to Wigan Pier*, who claim gentility through their “theoretical” knowledge of customs they cannot afford to perform in practice.²² The distinctive purpose to which *Woman's Weekly* and *Good*

²⁰ Lewis A. Northend's “A Holiday in Corsica” combines practical advice for travellers with descriptions of Corsican architecture, landscape, flora and fauna, and photographs of scenery (*GH* Apr 1928, 62-63, 144, 146-147, 148). “Outward Bound in S. S. ‘Luxury’” by Arthur Finch discusses the architecture and interior decoration of modern cruise liners, with photographs; that recent improvements to their “service accommodation” is considered “of special interest to *Good Housekeeping* readers” implies, perhaps flatteringly, that the latter (and their maids) will experience these up-to-date facilities for themselves (*GH* Aug 1928, 16-17, 102, 104).

²¹ E.g. The Church Travellers' Club offers a week in Switzerland from £8 6s 0d, a week in Belgium for £5 9s 6d, two weeks in Italy from £11 19s 6d, two weeks in France from £14 19s 6d, a motor tour in France for £15 18s 6d (adverts, *GH* Jul 1928, 204; Aug 1928, 166).

²² George Orwell, *The Road to Wigan Pier* (London: Martin Secker & Warburg Ltd, 1997 [1937]), 115.

Housekeeping readers put this knowledge differs, however. Aspiring to upper-middle-class status, middle-middle-class *Good Housekeeping* readers use their acquisition to participate in the leisure-class culture being appropriated by the upper middle classes in their annexation of upper-class influence.²³ Lower-middle-class *Woman's Weekly* readers use their acquisition to distinguish themselves from working-class women like those targeted by *Peg's Paper* and *My Weekly*, who, not aspiring to foreign travel, do not know how to conduct themselves like the leisure classes whilst on holiday. That *Woman's Weekly* readers are also fantasising about participating in the upper middle classes' annexation of leisure-class culture suggests that, as their material circumstances improve, their outlook is becoming more middle class. As social conduct literature, Barbara Mole's holiday pages offer *Woman's Weekly* readers an affordable means of distinguishing themselves from the working classes, through the promise that they, unlike the latter, will eventually become leisure class; in making this distinction, they stake their claim to middle-class status.

Not in front of the servants

If Barbara Mole's travel fantasies promise to fulfil *Woman's Weekly* readers' long-term leisure-class aspirations, the magazine's everyday conduct and etiquette advice offers more immediate fulfilment of their desires to distinguish themselves from the working classes and to claim middle-class status. In the context of *Woman's Weekly*'s ongoing romance narrative of class elevation, Mole promises 'serialised' fulfilment of readers' social desires, and conduct

²³ Nicola Humble, *The Feminine Middlebrow Novel 1920s to 1950s: Class, Domesticity, and Bohemianism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 70-71.

columns provide the short-term gratification offered by a complete story. Readers' increasingly middle-class outlook is evident in their preoccupation with social etiquette, an indication that they expect their appearances and behaviour to be subjected to the intense scrutiny and judgement characteristic of socially competitive, status-obsessed interwar middle-class society.²⁴ A cursory flip through Mrs Marryat's agony pages reveals a forensic attention to detail:

"When a lady is accompanied by a gentleman on a railway journey [...] [should she] sit by the door of the carriage or vice versa?"²⁵

"When introducing a relation, should one say what kind of relation he or she is, and the name?"²⁶

"How does one eat cheese?"²⁷

Chosen for publication, these questions are deemed of interest to all readers, presumed desperate to avoid committing *faux pas* that could reveal their lower-class origins. *Woman's Weekly* readers' status anxiety itself distinguishes them from the working-class individuals from whom they are eager to distance themselves, for *Peg's Paper* and *My Weekly* readers are comparatively far less interested in social conduct.²⁸ As with the knowledge of leisure-class conduct

²⁴ Alison Light, *Forever England: Femininity, Literature and Conservatism Between the Wars* (London: Routledge, 1991), 97.

²⁵ Reply: "She can sit anywhere she likes [...]. A lady generally prefers to travel facing the engine, so a gentleman will probably offer her that seat and take the opposite one himself" (from "Enquirer," "Mrs Marryat Advises," WW 14 Jan 1928, 76).

²⁶ Reply: when the person to whom you are introducing your relation is a close friend, give the former's name and relationship to yourself; when the person to whom you are introducing the relation is an acquaintance, the relationship is sufficient (from "Darky," "Mrs Marryat Advises," WW 5 May 1928, 827).

²⁷ Reply: in small pieces, on bread or biscuit (from "W," "Mrs Marryat Advises," WW 27 Oct 1928, 772).

²⁸ Neither magazine publishes conduct columns during 1928, although *Peg's Paper* advertises etiquette manual *Etiquette for Women* (PP 7 Apr 1928, 410) and responds to dating etiquette queries ("My Private Postbag," PP 17 Jul 1928, 31; 14 Oct 1928, 30).

that *Woman's Weekly* readers acquire from Mole's leisure-class holiday reviews, their knowledge of middle-class social survival skills distinguishes them from working-class readers of *Peg's Paper* and *My Weekly*, whose ignorance betrays the relative lowness of their social aspirations.

Woman's Weekly readers' lower-middle-class anxiety to distinguish themselves from the working classes through their conduct surfaces most explicitly in two etiquette columns discussing interactions with servants. Underpinning these columns lies a distinctively lower-middle-class fear that these working-class individuals' knowledge of 'correct' behaviour could be superior to readers' own, and that they will sneer at readers' performance of leisure-class conduct as pretentious.²⁹ Fears of being caught out by a friend's maid are realised in one columnist's account of how, paying a weekend visit, she "suffered acutely" from arriving

in the guest-room to find laid out on the priceless antique dressing-table, my powder, in a match-box, a mangy nailbrush, the most utilitarian pot of face cream and a puff that had certainly seen better days³⁰

Since being on visiting terms with people who have, she hints, inherited their furniture presumably compensates in part for her own lowly status, her account of her perceived humiliation in the eyes of the maid who unpacked her inferior belongings seeks to reassure *Woman's Weekly* readers fearing similar experiences that being friends with people who employ servants classifies them

²⁹ Although *Woman's Weekly* readers are assumed unable to afford to employ domestic help, some interwar lower-middle-class families could; their servants were not always convinced by their employers' "pretensions" to leisure-class status however, and were inclined to mock what they regarded as "snobbish affectation[s]" of leisure-class culture (Lucy Delap, "Kitchen-Sink Laughter: Domestic Service Humor in Twentieth-Century Britain," *The Journal of British Studies* Volume 49, Number 3 [2010]: 645).

³⁰ "The Best of a Bad Job," *WW* 7 Jul 1928, 2.

as superior to the latter by default. Etiquette column “The Correct Thing!” provides one reader’s fear of being caught out with a more practical solution.

When I am asked out to dinner and I arrive at the house, am I expected to say anything to the maid who opens the door? Should I ask if Mrs. So-and-So is at home, or do I just walk in with a ‘good evening’?

enquires a nameless correspondent who, whilst admitting by implication that she herself does not currently employ servants, acquires prestige from having friends who do.³¹ Anxious about speaking to the maid, the source of this reader’s fear may be that her accent, essential to the interwar middle classes’ social performance of their status,³² may betray her lowly origins.

There is no need for any visitor going to dinner with a friend to say anything to the maid who opens the door to her, for it is evident that the lady is at home since she has sent the invitation and it has been accepted

replies the columnist, adding that the reader may thank the maid for taking her coat, pass brief comment about the weather (although “nothing of this sort is necessary”), and give her name in order to be announced.³³ The reader’s refusal of discursive familiarity with the maid thus seeks to quell any possibility that the latter might recognise any degree of social familiarity between them: their non-verbal exchange reinforces the class boundary dividing the lower middle classes from the working classes.

That *Woman’s Weekly* readers are openly seeking conduct advice may be a clear indication that they are not yet fully middle-class. As Alan Ross observes, to consult etiquette guides is tantamount to admitting that one is uncomfortable

³¹ “The Correct Thing!” in *WW* 7 Jan 1928, 12.

³² Light, *England*, 91.

³³ Ibid.

in the social circles to which one is seeking access.³⁴ The explicitly pedagogical approach of *Woman's Weekly's* etiquette advice on Mrs Marryat's agony page, and in conduct columns, distinguishes these social conduct discourses from Barbara Mole's leisure-class holiday reviews, which convey knowledge under the assumption that readers already know what they are being taught. Mole's suggestion that restaurants are located "of course, in Montparnasse" refers to readers' existing knowledge of Paris, for instance, and her use of French words that, in context, require no translation, bespeaks their existing knowledge of the language ("why not sit at one of the big cafés, over an iced *citron pressé*, [...] watching the fashionable world which drives out for five o'clock *gouter*").³⁵ These explicit and covert conduct discourses address two different classes of reader: one who is openly lower class and eager to gain knowledge of leisure-class culture in order to appear middle class, and one who, considering herself middle class already, would be offended by the assumption that she does not already possess the knowledge she is eager to acquire. The mixture of both forms of conduct discourse in *Woman's Weekly* 1928 reinforces its increasingly prosperous readers' not-working-class but not-yet-middle-class status.

Romances of becoming middle class

As during 1918 and 1919, *Woman's Weekly* readers' class aspirations surface in the magazine's fictional romance narratives, which depict heroines with whom they are supposed to identify being wooed by heroes whom they are supposed to

³⁴ Alan S. C. Ross, "U and non-U – An Essay in Sociological Linguistics," in *Noblesse Oblige: An Enquiry into the Identifiable Characteristics of the English Aristocracy*, ed. Alan S. C. Ross and Nancy Mitford (London: Hamish Hamilton Ltd, 1973), 17.

³⁵ Barbara Mole, "Paris At Whitsun," WW 26 May 1928, 964.

find socio-economically desirable. Class status within these narratives is gendered by the assumption that, whilst men's status is defined by their occupation, women will be ranked according to their husbands' social position; following this assumption is the supposition that men can work to achieve social promotion, but that women must marry men ranking higher than them in order to gain elevation. *Woman's Weekly* romance heroes' occupations are, therefore, a barometer for gauging *Woman's Weekly* readers' class aspirations. The preference of 1928 heroines for heroes who have steady, salaried jobs with prospects suggests that these aspirations may indeed be becoming more middle class; that marriage to them constitutes class elevation reinforces readers' own not-yet-middle-class status.³⁶ The notion that men could achieve upward mobility through hard work and perseverance became a touchstone of lower-middle-class culture during the nineteenth century. From the beginning of the century, mutual improvement societies gave young men from upper-working-class and lower-middle-class backgrounds opportunities to acquire aspects of mental culture and manners commensurate with "gentlemanly" status;³⁷ during the mid-nineteenth century, the promotional structure of clerical occupations gave lower-middle-class white-collar workers' "ambition [...] some real validity".³⁸ Samuel Smiles' 1859 conduct manual *Self-Help* made upward

³⁶ Mavis marries a provincial solicitor (Maisie Greig, "Who'll Wash the Dishes?" WW 7 Jan 1928, 3-8, 10, 12; 14 Jan 1928, 60-62, 64, 67); Janette falls for an advertising artist (Edith Arundel, "Janette of the Tea-Rooms," WW 4 Feb 1928, 173-176, 178); Rachel becomes engaged to a doctor (Elizabeth Jordan, "The Joke Was On Francis," WW 7 Apr 1928, 605-608, 610, 612); Enid accepts an engineer's proposal (Beatrice Redpath, "Poor Little Mother," WW 2 Jun 1928, 977-982, 984).

³⁷ Anne Baltz Rodrick, "The Importance of Being an Earnest Improver: Class, Caste, and Self-Help in Mid-Victorian England," *Victorian Literature and Culture* Volume 29, Number 1 (2001): 41.

³⁸ Geoffrey Crossick, "The Emergence of the Lower Middle Class in Britain: A Discussion," in *The Lower Middle Class in Britain 1870-1914*, ed. Geoffrey Crossick (London: Croom Helm, 1977), 21.

mobility through personal merit seem genuinely possible, by seeking to propagate “lessons of industry, perseverance, and self-culture” amongst ambitious lower-middle-class readers, and by citing examples of men who had succeeded in working their way up from humble origins.³⁹ The persistence of Victorian self-help culture in mid-interwar lower-middle-class society is suggested by magazine adverts for education programmes promising to help participants achieve concurrent professional and social betterment; their implicitly positive attitude towards business distinguishes their readers from members of the established middle classes. Two *Woman’s Weekly* romance stories make masculine aspirations towards self-betterment seem desirable by depicting hard-working heroes’ professional and social ascension. These heroes’ upward mobility is activated by heroines who, by initiating the efforts of their future husbands to ‘make good’ in the workplace, behave with considerable social agency: their actions partially undercut women’s social disempowerment within a gendered class system by suggesting that, although their status is determined by the status of their husbands, their husbands’ status could be determined partly by them. *Woman’s Weekly* readers’ class scruples, however, destabilise these narratives’ implication that, within a self-help culture, upward mobility is universally available.

Advertisements for ‘self-help’ education programmes are published in *London Calling*, a 2d weekly Amalgamated Press publication that, advertised in *Woman’s Weekly*, targets readers belonging to the same lower-middle-class socio-economic demographic as readers of the domestic magazine.⁴⁰ Filled with

³⁹ Samuel Smiles, *Self Help: with Illustrations of Conduct and Perseverance* (London: John Murray, 1860), vii, 9-22.

⁴⁰ Advert, “*London Calling*,” WW 3 Mar 1928, 366.

book and film reviews,⁴¹ interest pieces,⁴² sporting columns,⁴³ legal news,⁴⁴ and witty portraits of celebrities,⁴⁵ *London Calling* targets a more general readership than the domestic magazine, which evidently includes professionally and socially ambitious men. “Are you content with the position you occupy now – with the money you are earning – or do you wish for something better and something more?” asks the International Correspondence Schools Ltd, assuming that “you” are motivated to work by capital gain and that “your” economic status will determine your social rank.⁴⁶ Recalling Smiles’ character-building programme of socio-economic self-improvement, a former student of the Wallace Attwood College promises readers exhibiting “grit and backbone” that they too will leap from working-class to upper-middle-class status in just six months:

Six months ago I was a greengrocer’s assistant [...] Today I have my own house in the country – telephone, garage, and every convenience. I have just ordered a new motor-car. I am my own master – holidays whenever I please.⁴⁷

Confirming his transformation from wage-earning employee to “master” of his own professional and social destinies with his expensive, status-defining acquisitions and a leisured lifestyle, this former grocer’s assistant links economic gain through professional betterment to class elevation, and ‘proves’ that, with

⁴¹ E.g. Jacquette, “About Books,” *LC* 2 Jun 1928, 22; Maud Hughes, “Flickers: Sidelights on the Shadow Shows,” *LC* 2 Jun 1928, 19.

⁴² E.g. K. R. G. Browne, “A Letter to an Official,” *LC* 14 Apr 1928, 8; Sir John Foster Fraser, “Let’s Revive the Ducking Stool!” *LC* 2 Jun 1928, 6.

⁴³ E.g. S. J. Simon, “‘Googly’ on Percy Fender,” *LC* 2 Jun 1928, 20; SJS, “‘Googly’ on Herbert Sutcliffe,” *LC* 16 Jun 1928, 23.

⁴⁴ E.g. Sir H. H. Slessor, “Legal Lights,” *LC* 30 Jun 1928, 14; F. Murray Milne, “At Home With a Leading K. C.,” *LC* 30 Jun 1928, 15.

⁴⁵ E.g. Philip Page and George Whitelaw, “Celebrities on Toast: Sir Henry Wood,” *LC* 14 Apr 1928, 9; William Blackwood and GW, “Celebrities on Toast: Sir Harry Lauder,” *LC* 16 Jun 1928, 13.

⁴⁶ Advert, “International Correspondence Schools Ltd,” *LC* 17 Mar 1928, 8.

⁴⁷ Advert, “Wallace Attwood College,” *LC* 24 Mar 1928, 7.

hard work, both are possible; his testimony provides similarly ambitious male readers with an aspirational romance of upward mobility through paid work, and implies that this means of elevation is available to anyone, regardless of background. In aspiring to achieve social self-betterment by increasing their economic capital, the would-be self-made men targeted by these advertisements distinguish themselves implicitly from members of the established middle classes by rejecting the latter's snobbery towards business and businessmen, who rank beneath members of the professions by their presumed desire to work for 'vulgar' financial gain rather than through a sense of obligation towards their clients or their desire to serve the state.⁴⁸ The absence of this snobbishness towards business, which evidently offers genuine possibilities for personal elevation, exhibits the not-yet-middle-class status of *Woman's Weekly's* lower-middle-class readers in the context of a different magazine.

Woman's Weekly romances "In The Ivory Tower" by Judith Mackay and "The Stake" by Elizabeth Jordan validate these masculine fantasies of meritocratic upward mobility by implying that men who work hard to achieve their ambitions make more desirable husbands than men who do not earn their status. "In The Ivory Tower" hero Kenneth, an aspiring author, initially believes that working as an advertising copywriter in his father's stove-manufacturing business will quash his literary ambitions, which require leisure to be fulfilled – "[i]f I am to write, I must have leisure for study and travel, the opportunity to study humanity".⁴⁹ Daphne, a fellow copywriter, is angered by Kenneth's lack of

⁴⁸ Raphael Samuel, "The Middle Class Between the Wars," *New Socialist* Jan/Feb 1983 36.

⁴⁹ Judith Mackay, "In The Ivory Tower," *WW* 8 Dec 1928, 1068.

respect for hard work, and seeks to convince him that this, rather than leisure, is the means to fulfilling his aspirations.

Where could you have a better opportunity for studying humanity than here in this office? [...] If you want to get down to life [...] go and work in the factories. [...] Work as these men work, live as they live! And, perhaps [...] you'll have some understanding of what life is like!⁵⁰

By thus disassociating literary subject matter and production from leisure and linking both to hard labour in offices and factories, Daphne claims 'high' aesthetic culture for the lower middle and working classes; her claim pre-empts assertions made by *Woman's Weekly's* masculine columnist The Man Who Sees in his 1938-1939 "How To Acquire Culture" series, explored in Chapter Three. Stung by her criticism and determined to prove that he is capable of hard work, Kenneth leaves the office and takes a job making stoves in the foundry, effectively accepting social demotion. He is promoted to commercial traveller, in class terms elevation from working-class manual labourer to lower-middle-class white-collar worker, and returns to Daphne a year later, brandishing an acceptance letter from a publisher and declaring that his "first novel's been accepted! I worked at it at night, when my working hours were over. I thought it out during all those long drives [...] between the towns where I was selling".⁵¹ His experience proves Daphne correct in asserting that upward mobility through hard work is superior to leisured elevation. Rather than 'inheriting' his desired literary status at his father's expense, he achieves authorship by starting at the bottom and working his way up. His subsequent proposal to Daphne acknowledges and rewards her part in activating his class elevation. Her shift

⁵⁰ Mackay, "Ivory Tower," WW 8 Dec 1928, 1068.

⁵¹ Mackay, "Ivory Tower," WW 15 Dec 1928, 1111.

from being an advertising copywriter to a published author's wife constitutes social promotion, through marriage to a man whose status she helped to create.

"The Stake" presents a similar meritocratic romance of male professional and social promotion activated by female support. Hero Francis begins the narrative down-and-out in London following the curtailment of his education as a result of his father's death.⁵² Unable to find work and forced by lack of funds to leave his hotel, he is preparing to spend a fourth night sleeping rough when he meets Ellen, a typist, who deduces his middle-class background from the quality of his clothing. "The blue suit he wore [...] was crumpled and rather faded, but it had been a fairly good suit [...] He looked, Ellen reasoned, as though he had been well brought up".⁵³ Ellen befriends Francis, and supports him financially and emotionally whilst he seeks employment. Lending him money for food and clothing, and paying his rent for a room at her boarding house, she turns economic producer and is repaid when, with her help, he finds a job with good prospects in an insurance firm that will, in the short term, enable them to marry, and in the long term, assure his continued elevation – presumably with Ellen's continued (domestic) support.⁵⁴

Like Kenneth, Francis learns to embrace self-betterment through being punished for his snobbery towards hard work. In Kenneth's case, this snobbery emerges in his initial belief that in order to succeed as a writer, he must lead a leisured lifestyle – only after accepting demotion and working hard for promotion does he achieve his aspiration, the status of a published author. Francis' snobbery lies in his unwillingness to accept employment that he

⁵² Elizabeth Jordan, "The Stake," *WW* 7 Jul 1928, 5.

⁵³ Jordan, "Stake," 5.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 22.

considers beneath him. Despite his incomplete education and lack of professional experience, he sets his sights on a managerial position consistent with his father's status, "[h]ead of an office of some kind"⁵⁵ – unwilling to "begin lower down" as Ellen suggests, he applies for jobs targeting "young men with capital"⁵⁶ and consequently remains unemployed. Concluding that Francis is being "handicapped by a few traditions which he had made his own",⁵⁷ she connects his unrealistic attitude with his eagerness to preserve the middle-class status to which he has been born and brought up – perversely, this is preventing him from leading a middle-class lifestyle, for unless he is willing to "drop [his] ideas about beginning at the top"⁵⁸ and earn his way up, he will remain unemployed. Her disapproval of middle-class "tradition" obliquely criticises inherited status. Eventually she persuades him "to begin at the bottom and work up" professionally and socially, by accepting a three-pounds-a-week position as office boy at an insurance firm.⁵⁹ Like Kenneth, he must accept demotion in order to gain promotion, and his subsequent trajectory endorses meritocratic elevation through hard work and personal merit: by the *denouement* his salary has risen to four pounds per week plus two-pound commissions, and his employer, predicting that he will "make a good insurance man",⁶⁰ promises further promotion. Like Daphne, Ellen looks forward to marrying a man whose professional and social progress are assured, and which were activated in the first place by her encouragement and support.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 8.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 7.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 5.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 8.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 22.

Meritocratic promotion in “In The Ivory Tower” and “The Stake” reflects the growing social confidence of the interwar lower middle classes. It is complicated, however, by their heroes’ social origins. Although both work hard to achieve concurrent professional and social promotion, neither is ever truly lower class: Kenneth is the son of a successful manufacturer and Francis has had a middle-class upbringing. Their demotion in order to prove that self-activated promotion is possible acknowledges the not-working-class, but not-yet-middle-class status of *Woman’s Weekly* readers, whose desire to distance themselves from the working classes precludes fantasising about truly lower-class heroes, but who also want to believe that their husbands or husbands-to-be could earn promotion to comfortable middle-class status through hard work and with their support. In thus acknowledging readers’ class scruples, these narratives undermine their own critique of inherited elevation – Kenneth rises within his father’s firm, and Francis’ education, although curtailed by his father’s death, will presumably give him an advantage professionally, and may indeed be responsible for his promising start within the firm. In thus hinting that in order to become middle class one must be middle class to begin with, these narratives destabilise the self-help principle that upward mobility is achievable by any man who is prepared to work hard enough – although neither states explicitly that middle-class status is inaccessible to lower-class men, by centring their romances of elevation on heroes from middle-class backgrounds they suggest that it is. Lower-class men are, they imply, excluded from middle-class culture. These stories suggest that upward mobility may not, after all, be universally acquirable.

Boys to men

In providing *Woman's Weekly* readers with fantasies of meritocratic male elevation activated by women, “In The Ivory Tower” and “The Stake” continue British masculinity’s recovery from the First World War. Daphne and Ellen, in activating Kenneth and Francis’ professional and social promotion, display signs of the competency characteristic of female characters in interwar middlebrow and romance fiction; Kenneth and Francis’ personas recall the fragile, boyish characteristics of their male counterparts.⁶¹ Recalling narrative codes used by *Woman's Weekly*’s 1918 and 1919 romance stories, in which heroes’ attainment of a wife, and with her the prospect of children, signalled their recovery from their war wounds and readiness to resume their status as head of home and society, Kenneth and Francis’ professional and social promotion is articulated as their transition from boyhood to manhood.

Kenneth, during his incarnation as a reluctant copywriter, is described repeatedly as boyish⁶² – capable, competent Daphne is the ‘senior partner’ in their personal and professional relations, ignoring his romantic overtures and correcting his work. As Kenneth explains to a colleague, “she simply took [a piece of advertising copy], and changed it until there was nothing left of my idea at all”⁶³ – her authorship of his text establishes her professional authority.

Kenneth interprets her insistence that he should abandon his privileged position in his father’s office as a test of his masculinity, declaring that he intends to “[go] out into the world and [prove] himself a man” – “[s]he’s started to make a man of him!”⁶⁴ declares another character of Daphne, recalling First World War

⁶¹ Humble, *Middlebrow*, 197-198; Jay Dixon, *The Romance Fiction of Mills & Boon, 1909-1990s* (London: UCL Press Ltd, 1999), 64-65.

⁶² E.g. “this boy [...] he’s a handsome boy” (Mackay, “Ivory Tower,” *WW* 1 Dec 1928, 1102).

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 1027.

⁶⁴ Mackay, “Ivory Tower,” *WW* 15 Dec 1928, 1004.

propaganda ordering women to make their menfolk prove their masculinity by fighting for their homeland.⁶⁵ 1918 *Woman's Weekly* romance heroine Minnie succeeded in this enterprise and was rewarded by a suitably manly husband;⁶⁶ a decade later, Daphne receives a similar reward. Whilst Kenneth's soon-to-be-published novel 'proves' his virility symbolically, his transition from boyhood to manhood is made more explicit by the replacement of his previous boyishness with a vigorous new manliness, wrought in his powerful physique and masterful behaviour.

It was not alone the change in his appearance, though months in the factory had given him muscles hard as iron, and months of driving in the sun had tanned his skin to a warm, rich hue. It was the change in his manner [...] There was in his face and in his bearing a strength and authority he had not had a year ago.⁶⁷

Having activated Kenneth's recovery of his manhood, Daphne resumes her pre-war femininity. "[I]t's all your doing" he tells her, acknowledging that she has enabled him to fulfil his aspirations.

"I'd like to dedicate this book to you [...] I'd like to dedicate it: *To My Wife*." Daphne could not answer him, but her eyes brimmed over with happy tears. She put her hands out to him in a blind gesture of surrender.⁶⁸

Whilst Kenneth acknowledges Daphne's role as the agent of his coming-of-age, her silence indicates that, whereas previously she authored his words, she has

⁶⁵ "If he does not think you and your country are worth fighting for – do you think he is WORTHY of you?" asks a 1915 poster of "Young Women of London" ("To the Young Women of London," poster. [Britain: David Allen and Sons Ltd], Art.IWM PST 4903. Available via <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/28305>, accessed 21 Feb 2018).

⁶⁶ "For Love Of Him," WW 30 Nov 1918, 342-343. Minnie refuses to marry Ernie unless he enlists; he does so, and in due course is awarded the VC.

⁶⁷ Mackay, "Ivory Tower," 15 Dec 1928, 1111.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

now given authority in their relationship to him. Having restored his masculinity, she will give up her competence and resume a more traditionally feminine role.

“The Stake” likewise offers a *Bildungsroman* romance in which a competent heroine makes a man of her ‘emasculated’ hero. During his first encounter with Ellen, Francis resembles “a rather shabby boy” and is subsequently behaviourally as well as physically youthful, “boyishly eager” to “treat” his benefactress to films, ice-creams, and river excursions.⁶⁹ Invoking the ceaseless partying of the Bright Young People in Evelyn Waugh’s 1930 novel *Vile Bodies*, whose decadence Humble diagnoses as a symptom of shellshock, Francis’ love of pleasure presents him as a specimen of psychologically fragile post-First World War masculinity.⁷⁰ Competent Ellen mothers him, watching “maternally” as he eats a meal she has provided⁷¹ – herself a hard worker and careful saver, she finds his love of excursions, for which he pays using money she has given him, “irresponsible”.⁷² Like Kenneth, Francis attains manhood along with professional and class promotion. Forced to adopt a position of economic responsibility when Ellen is hospitalised with appendicitis, he supplements his insurance salary by taking a job as a cocktail pianist, and proves himself capable of providing for her financially by paying her hospital bills, establishing himself as her economic producer by insisting that this is “my job”.⁷³ Echoing the narrative trajectory of post-Armistice *Woman’s Weekly* romance “A Secret For Two”, in which ex-serviceman Harry regains his damaged masculinity by caring for Faith when she is ill with pneumonia (see

⁶⁹ Jordan, “Stake,” 6-10.

⁷⁰ Humble, *Middlebrow*, 197.

⁷¹ Jordan, “Stake,” 6.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 8.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 22.

Chapter One), Francis and Ellen's economic role reversal is brought about by the latter's physical weakness, which triggers the return of his masculine strength. Holding down an evening job as well as a day job tires him physically, so once Ellen has recovered he will give the former up; his weekly earnings will drop from seven pounds to four pounds (plus commission) as a result, which is too little to support them both, so Ellen will have to continue working in paid employment for the first two years of their marriage.⁷⁴ He will remain her economic dependant for this period. Finally, despite having proven himself capable of financial responsibility, he retains an element of his frivolousness: immediately after telling Ellen about his pay rise, he invites her to "sneak out" of hospital "for a little celebration".⁷⁵ Although competent Ellen has successfully 'made a man' of her husband-to-be by preparing him for economic producer-status, it is evident that she will remain the competent partner in their relationship for the time being. According to this romance narrative, men are recovering the masculinity that was damaged by their conflict experiences during the First World War, but they have a little way to go before they are fully recovered. The happy ending of their romance is delayed a little longer; like *Woman's Weekly's* lower-middle-class readers, they are in a state of transition.

Ladies of leisure?

As during 1918 and 1919, *Woman's Weekly* readers' daily work is not confined to the domestic sphere; the magazine continues to assume that they will work in

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

paid employment until they marry. Cecile's catering advice for business girls,⁷⁶ Mrs Marryat's advice for jobseekers, dress patterns for "business" frocks, and office conduct columns continue to address readers in white-collar clerical occupations;⁷⁷ the expectation that they will leave work when they marry surfaces, again, in the *denouements* of romance stories, in which working heroines prepare to become fulltime housewives. Concerns about the potentially negative impact of office work on readers' femininity resurface in a conduct column accusing business girls of being overbearing, dictatorial, and selfish towards their friends⁷⁸ – although this feature omits discussion of how working readers' business personas would affect marital relations, domestically-minded heroines of office romance stories, as they did during 1918 and 1919, offer oblique reassurance that office work will not spoil working readers for marriage.⁷⁹ Again, working readers distinguish *Woman's Weekly* from other publications, by both their visibility and occupation type. Story magazine *Peg's Paper* remains largely uninterested in its readers' workaday lives, continuing to offer the fictional escapism promised by "Peg" in her inaugural editorial.⁸⁰ *My Weekly* shows a greater interest than ten years previously in its working readers, weekly feature "Other People's Lives" offering a taste of various female

⁷⁶ "Cooking On A Single Gas Ring: For The Bachelor Girl Living In Rooms On Her Own" shows working readers with tight budgets and barely any living space how to feed and entertain their friends (WW 26 May 1928, 956).

⁷⁷ "Miss Mole Was So Absent Minded," WW 7 Jan 1928, 14-15; "Miss Rivers Always Rushed," WW 21 Jan 1928, 112; "Miss Mendip Was Always Mean," WW 14 Jan 1928, 47-48; "When Pretending Pays!" WW 24 Nov 1928, 939.

⁷⁸ "She-Who-Must-Be-Obeyed," WW 6 Oct 1928, 566.

⁷⁹ Secretary Dora's employer proposes to her in the showroom she has furnished in his department store (Nancy Cabell, "The Dancing Doll," WW 13 Oct 1928, 651); secretary Enid fulfills her dream of "husband, home and children to solve the why and wherefore of existence" by marrying her widowed employer and becoming stepmother to his son (June Stonebridge, "The Square Peg," WW 30 Jun 1928, 1171-1176).

⁸⁰ Peg, "Let's be Pals," PP 15 May 1919, 1.

occupations; some offer oblique careers advice⁸¹ and all present paid employment positively.⁸² Descriptions of jobs involving rough manual labour or factory work distinguish *My Weekly*'s working-class readers from *Woman's Weekly*'s lower-middle-class clerical workers; the increased visibility of working readers in *My Weekly* adds weight to the argument against Beddoe's contention that interwar women's magazines sought increasingly to domesticate their readers. Printing fewer office conduct articles, *Woman's Weekly*'s interest in its working readers seems to have lessened since 1918 and 1919, which could suggest that its readers *are* becoming more domestically minded, or that the magazine simply takes it for granted that its readers, like its romance heroines, work in paid employment before they marry during 1928.

Woman's Weekly's principal focus is its readers' domestic labour. Inasmuch as *Woman's Weekly* readers' transitory not-working-class, but not-yet-middle-class status surfaces in the magazine's housework discourses, they are constructed as proud, hardworking domestic producers who, nevertheless, fantasise about servant-keeping and seem eager to disguise their current servantless status – that they would like to be thought members of the servant-keeping middle classes indicates that their aspirations have altered during the previous decade. As during 1918 and 1919, *Woman's Weekly*'s housework discourses distinguish the magazine from other publications, principally middle-middle-class *Good Housekeeping*; again, *Woman's Weekly*'s attitude towards

⁸¹ Miss Wright, "If It Grows – We Sell It," *MW* 14 Jul 1928, 51; Miss Renee Barton, "What a Clerkess Has to Do," *MW* 11 Aug 1928, 164.

⁸² "Work in a Laundry" enthuses about camaraderie with other workers, outings, and dances: "I cannot understand some girls saying they would not like to work in a laundry. They are very stupid" (Miss K. Masney, *MW* 14 Jan 1928, 44).

housework challenges Crosland and Bourdieu's claim that lower-middle-class culture is ersatz leisure-class culture.

"Oh, to be a woman with lots of spare time and unnecessary wealth!" sighs *Woman's Weekly's* fashion and gossip columnist The London Girl, voicing 1928 readers' aspiration to become ladies of leisure with servants to do their housework for them.⁸³ *Woman's Weekly* readers' desire to belong to the servant-keeping classes is fulfilled in fantasy by Mrs Rawlins, the 'cook' in a series of adverts promoting Reckitt's Blue laundry whitener and Robin starch, who classifies her relationally as a leisured mistress of servants by addressing her as "Mum"⁸⁴ and who shares her expertise 'in passing' rather than by stating explicitly that she expects her to use the product herself.

I used to do for Mrs Carstairs, when all hers were little ones. She would have them done in white, Mum, but I must say I kept them lovely. Reckitt's Blue in the rinsing water and Robin Starch making the things come up every week just like new! And really, Mum, using Robin, it isn't work at all.⁸⁵

Using distinctively working-class speech to address the advert's reader as her mistress, Mrs Rawlins places the latter in a position of class superiority to herself. Plump and matronly, her thick, white hair pinned back by combs, the sleeves of her striped blouse rolled up, and a spotless white apron tied over her comfortable bosom, Mrs Rawlins looks every inch the trusted family retainer; always pictured hard at work, she personifies domestic competence, and this, along with her friendliness, professional pride, and cheerful indulgence of her ex-mistress' foibles, makes her a middle-class housewife's fantasy at a time when,

⁸³ The London Girl, "Whispers," WW 11 Feb 1928, 217.

⁸⁴ Advert, "Reckitt's Blue and Robin Starch," WW 6 Oct 1928, ii.

⁸⁵ "Reckitt's Blue and Robin Starch," ii.

owing to what was known in middle-class circles as the Servant Problem, such willing domestic labourers were becoming increasingly scarce (Fig. 8).⁸⁶ Witness E. M. Delafield's *Provincial Lady*, constantly trying to propitiate a series of obstreperous cooks and housemaids, grumbling about their poor work ethic, and struggling to replace them when they give notice; her 1930 *Diary* records the "servant question" as a recurring topic of conversation at middle-class social gatherings, where a household's ability to attract and keep servants is a means of scoring social points.⁸⁷ Within this culture, *Woman's Weekly's* reader, addressed as a member of the servant-employing classes, shares middle-class housewives' cook-related frustrations and wishful thinking, and even feels smug at having succeeded in employing such a 'treasure' – this assumption of servant-keeping status is revealed as probable flattery however, by an advert proclaiming that "Domestics [are] Wanted" in Canada, which, encouraging *Woman's Weekly* readers to emigrate in search of servants' jobs, indicates much closer class proximity between the cook and her 'employer'.⁸⁸ Despite increasing servantless housewives' leisure time, laundry products that they use themselves are ersatz servants and bestow leisure-class status in fantasy alone. To the extent that she is an affordable substitute for a genuine leisure-class distinction, Mrs Rawlins upholds Crosland and Bourdieu's assumption that lower-middle-class culture is a cut-price version of leisure-class culture.

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⁸⁶ Jackson, *Middle Classes*, 84; Rachel Bell and Simon Gunn, *Middle Classes: Their Rise and Sprawl* (London: Phoenix, 2003), 69.

⁸⁷ E. M. Delafield, *Diary of a Provincial Lady*, in *The Diary of a Provincial Lady* by E. M. Delafield (London: Virago Press Ltd, 1993 [1930]), 8, 22, 41.

⁸⁸ Advert, "Domestics Wanted," *WW* 3 Nov 1928, 817.

Fig. 8. Mrs Rawlins hard at work (Advert, "Reckitt's Blue and Robin Starch," WW 6 Oct 1928, ii).

Crosland's claim that the lower middle classes are striving and failing to reproduce their superiors' lifestyles on a lower budget is challenged, however, by other housework discourses in *Woman's Weekly*, which, emerging as distinctively lower middle class in relation to housework discourses in middle-middle-class *Good Housekeeping*, contribute to the magazine's production of a lower-middle-class domestic culture underpinned by non-leisure-class values. Commensurate with the impression of its readers' economic affluence given by its advertising pages, *Good Housekeeping* readers' socio-economic superiority is indicated by, for instance, an article discussing changes to the preparatory school curriculum;⁸⁹ their leisured status seems confirmed by a cookery article assuming that the Servant Problem is forcing some of them to learn to cook. "Cooking a Dinner Unaided" provides the "housewife [...] faced with the problem of running a house singlehanded" with step-by-step instructions for preparing dinner for five guests, providing, in deference to her presumed lack of catering experience, advice that would probably seem obvious to more experienced cooks: menu-planning based on seasonal availability, how and where to purchase ingredients, and a detailed preparation timetable that includes when to lay the table and when to dress for dinner.⁹⁰ Since even *Good Housekeeping* readers who previously employed servants would not in all likelihood be quite so clueless, "Cooking a Dinner Unaided" functions partly as social flattery, addressing all

⁸⁹ Marian Bethell, "Preparatory Schools," *GH* Mar 1928, 70, 147, 150.

⁹⁰ "Cooking a Dinner Unaided," *GH* Nov 1928, 77, 99-102.

readers as women whose lifestyles have thus-far been so detached from domestic labour that they need reminding that canned peas need to be opened before cooking.⁹¹ Its assumption is that they classify themselves, and desire to be classified, as middle middle or upper middle class.

Whether or not *Good Housekeeping* readers really belong to the servant-employing middle classes, the absence of how-to guides for the newly servantless from *Woman's Weekly* during 1928 classifies the magazine's target readership below that of *Good Housekeeping*. Tellingly, the lower-middle-class magazine's domestic advice columns make no pretence whatsoever that its readers employ, or are only temporarily unable to employ, domestic help, addressing them openly as servantless housewives. Alongside adverts that, unlike the Mrs Rawlins series, depict housewives doing their own housework, responses to childcare, cleaning, dressmaking and gardening queries openly assume that correspondents are performing these domestic tasks themselves; in this respect, *Woman's Weekly* shares its approach to housework with working-class publication *My Weekly*, which, although still primarily a fiction magazine, now devotes a weekly "Our Home Page" to cookery and housekeeping advice, much of it contributed by readers themselves. (Whilst *My Weekly* readers' increased interest in housework supports Deirdre Beddoe's contention that women's magazines sought increasingly to domesticate their interwar readerships, it could also indicate a loyal readership that is aging – the young women who bought and read the magazine during 1918 and 1919 are now married and running homes of their own.) As well as assuming that readers are doing their own chores, *Woman's Weekly*'s domestic advice columns present servantless housewifery in

⁹¹ "Cooking a Dinner," 100.

a positive light: drawings of young, pretty housewives happily performing domestic tasks in pleasant surroundings figure doing one's own housework as a desirable lifestyle choice (Fig. 9).

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Fig. 9. Positive depictions of servantless housewifery. (Note that in "Fish For Lunch," the daughter imitates her mother by teaching her own 'daughter,' a doll, to cook.) (Clockwise from top left: "Fixing Tiles On The Wall," WW 17 Nov 1928, 896; "Loose Knife Handles," WW 17 Nov 1928, 888; Cecile, "Fish For Lunch," WW 17 Nov 1928, 921).

Youthful, bright, and capable-looking, the housewife declaring that "[y]es! [She is] one of the two million housewives who wash [...] with Persil!" is a desirable model to emulate (Fig. 10);⁹² an advert for Brown and Polson's Corn Flour even validates servantless housewifery by proffering labour-saving ready-made foods as status detractors rather than status enhancers, claiming that "[i]n experienced cooks may need pudding-powders and blancmange mixtures [...] the housewife who has learned the foundations of cookery likes to know what she is using".⁹³ Establishing domestic competence as criteria with which housewives who do not belong to the servant-employing classes might claim superiority to newly servantless leisured housewives resorting to culinary cheats, this advert reverses the value-system underpinning the Mrs Rawlins series, which ranks housewives who employ servants above housewives who do not. Encouraging *Woman's*

⁹² Advert, "Persil" laundry soap, WW 27 Oct 1928, 717.

⁹³ Advert, "Brown and Polson's Corn Flour," WW 4 Aug 1928, iii.

Weekly readers both to dream of leisure-class status and to feel proud of their domestic skills and superior towards housewives who lack them, these discourses seem to construct conflicting class aspirations. The absence of pretence surrounding servant-keeping distinguishes lower-middle-class *Woman's Weekly's* housework discourses from those of middle-middle-class *Good Housekeeping*, and challenges Bourdieu and Crosland's claim that lower-middle-class culture is ersatz leisure-class culture. Maintaining the pretence of servant keeping, *Good Housekeeping* performs Bourdieu's middlebrow 'trick' of fooling its readers.

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Fig. 10. The 'Persil' housewife (Advert, "Persil," WW 27 Oct 1928, 717).

Although *Woman's Weekly* does not trick its readers into thinking that they are members of the servant-keeping middle classes, it helps them to trick one another. The conflict between *Woman's Weekly* readers' pride in their status as servantless housewives and their desire to join the servant-employing middle classes is exacerbated by adverts for hand cosmetics, which promise women who do their own 'rough' chores the means to eradicate evidence of their domestic labours. Snowfire soap tablets "soothe and protect" readers' "soft white hands";⁹⁴ Cutex Cuticle Remover assures others' admiration, "[c]harming tributes to lovely hands";⁹⁵ Glymiel Jelly claims to "[stop] chapped hands when you hang out the

⁹⁴ Advert, "Snowfire" soap, WW 7 Jan 1928, 26.

⁹⁵ Advert, "Cutex Cuticle Remover," WW 1 Dec 1928, 1005.

washing”.⁹⁶ The latter’s openness about readers’ servantless status is shared by Cutex Cuticle Cream and Cuticle Oil, which warn that “[c]onstant washing of the hands, exposure to grime [...] dry up the nail-rim”⁹⁷ and Hinds Honey & Almond Cream, which promises that “[y]our skin will [...] become soft and velvety, and will remain so no matter [...] how hard you work at home”,⁹⁸ pits the absence of pretence surrounding servant-keeping in *Woman’s Weekly* domestic advice columns directly against readers’ desire for leisure-class status; Cream of Di-Miska – tagline, “[l]adies are known by their hands” – is even more explicit, revealing their motivation to buy the product by declaring that

‘[y]ou can tell she’s a lady. She has such lovely white hands!’ But if you knew the truth, she has to work just like you. There are domestic duties, washing-up, pots and pans to clean, the children’s washing, and a score of other tasks to perform every day of her life.⁹⁹

Neither a leisured nor a proudly servantless housewife, this Cream of Di-Miska model is a woman who cooks, cleans for, and clothes her family whilst successfully convincing her peers that she employs domestic help. *Woman’s Weekly* readers’ eagerness to eradicate the physical effects of rough housework can almost certainly be attributed to their anxiousness to distinguish themselves visibly from working-class women. Hand cream adverts in *Peg’s Paper* promise to alleviate the roughness and redness of manual workers’ hands,¹⁰⁰ and ‘Peg’ advises a reader “in service” who complains that “the constant immersion of her hands has made her skin hard and coarse”¹⁰¹ – these discourses’ direct

⁹⁶ Advert, “Glymiel Jelly” hand cream, *WW* 7 Jan 1928, 30.

⁹⁷ Advert, “Cutex Cuticle Cream and Cuticle Oil,” *WW* 27 Oct 1928, 749.

⁹⁸ Advert, “Hinds Honey & Almond Cream,” *WW* 1 Dec 1928, 1025.

⁹⁹ Advert, “Cream of Di-Miska” hand cream, *WW* 3 Mar 1928, 407.

¹⁰⁰ E.g. adverts, “Cream of Di-Miska” hand cream, *PP* 20 Mar 1928, 23; 22 May 1928, 27.

¹⁰¹ Peg, “My Private Postbag,” *PP* 10 Jul 1928, 31.

association of roughened hands with working-class female occupations accounts for lower-middle-class housewives' anxieties surrounding their hands' appearance. Whilst aspiring to be classified as a housewife who can afford domestic help, *Woman's Weekly's* reader fears being classified by her hands as a domestic servant herself.

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Fig. 11. Hinds Honey & Almond Cream promises to eradicate the physical effects of housework (Advert, "Hinds Honey & Almond Cream," *WW* 13 Oct 1928, 653).

The possibility that *Woman's Weekly* readers' servantless status gives them moral superiority to leisured housewives, explored in Chapter One, resurfaces in the magazine's 1928 romance fiction, which, again, seeks to make desirable its domestic ideologies. Complete stories "The Story Of A Bad-Tempered Woman" by Irene Merrill Mason and "Once A Butterfly" by M. B. Kibler suggest that servantless housewifery is rewarding, pleasurable, and, in comparison to leisured housewifery, morally edifying. In articulating this distinctively lower-middle-class championship of servantless housewifery, "The Story Of A Bad-Tempered Woman" and "Once A Butterfly" build *Woman's Weekly's* lower-middle-class home as a productive space and its lower-middle-class housewife as a domestic producer. In doing so, both romances allude to models of housewives in pre-industrial and industrialised societies constructed by Olive Schreiner in her 1911 feminist polemic *Woman and Labour*.

In promoting servantless housewifery, "The Story Of A Bad-Tempered Woman" writes its heroine Edna into another gendered meritocratic system of

class elevation. Rather than supporting her hero's quest for promotion, however, she works her own way up: her acceptance of demotion and subsequent earning of promotion echoes the trajectories of meritocratic heroes Kenneth and Francis. Widowed at twenty-five, Edna supports herself and her two young children by selling coats in a department store. Since her mother – presumably a victim of the post-First World War decimation of upper-class fortunes – was “poor but aristocratic” and her wealthy husband could afford for her to lead a life of leisure, shop-work represents a significant drop in class status for Edna. Evidently hoping to be readmitted to leisure-class society through professional promotion, she aspires to become head buyer, a role that would involve travelling to fashionable leisure-class haunts, New York and Paris.¹⁰² She damages her chance of promotion however, by snapping at an elderly customer, Mrs Slater. During their exchange, Mrs Slater mentions that she is about to spend the summer with her son and is looking for a home help to work alongside her at his farm; three days later, Edna, having resigned from her job after being rebuked by her employer for her rudeness, accepts the position.

At first, former leisured housewife Edna finds domestic service even more degrading than shop work, experiencing “the most galling moment in her life” when she asks Mrs Slater for the first time, “what can I do for you?”¹⁰³ Despite her social humiliation however, she begins to take pleasure in her new occupation. The pride detectable in her acknowledgement that the “polished” settee and “burnished” fireplace in farmer Bruce's newly decorated sitting room are “the work of her own hands” signals that her single-handed completion of his

¹⁰² Irene Merrill Mason, “The Story Of A Bad-Tempered Woman,” WW 30 Nov 1928, 780.

¹⁰³ Mason, “Bad-Tempered Woman,” 782.

domestic improvements has satisfied her more than her role, recollected for comparative purposes, in “directing” the “army of decorators and cleaning women” who transformed her leisure-class marital home¹⁰⁴ – claiming that she “love[s] making anything beautiful”¹⁰⁵ she elevates housework from drudgery to art, and houseworker from drudge to artist. Her class promotion parallels her cultural rise, as, working in the vegetable garden, she begins to recover the authority she lost with her social demotion, growing “conscious of [a] firmness in her step, [a] straightening of her shoulders, [a] dominant tilt to her head”.¹⁰⁶ Her recovery of authority through the performance of rough manual labour indicates that she, like Kenneth, is gaining social stature as a consequence of her social demotion, within a system of meritocratic rather than inherited status. Whereas previously she owed her rank to her aristocratic inheritance and wealthy husband, now she is pulling herself up the rungs of a meritocratic hierarchy in which status is earned by the individual through hard work and self-sufficiency – growing vegetables to feed her children, Bruce, and Mrs Slater, Edna highlights the latter. More broadly, the conflict between *Woman’s Weekly* readers’ desire for leisure-class distinctions and their disapproval of leisured housewifery arises in the disparity between the social authority inherent in Edna’s work-roughened physical appearance, and hand cream adverts’ claims to disguise evidence that their user has been performing similar chores in order that she might pass as a lady.

Thus far, Edna’s demotion and self-promotion mimic the fall and rise of Kenneth, who works his way back up the class system: paid for her domestic

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 783.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 784.

labours, she, like he, is earning back her social authority professionally. The distinctively ‘masculine’ physical characteristics she gains in doing so associate her rise with this typically masculine mode of elevation. Edna’s happy ending – like Kenneth’s, the achievement of her aspirations for social betterment – is achieved through marriage however, which ensures that she is promoted within a feminine rather than a masculine system. Eventually she returns to the department store, where her former employer, impressed by her new work ethic, offers her the promotion towards which she aspired. On the same day however, Bruce Slater turns up and proposes – she turns down the opportunity to travel to Paris as Mr Gray’s assistant, once the summit of her professional and social ambitions, and accepts. Since it is likely that she will continue to perform the domestic work she took so much pleasure in, by accepting Bruce’s proposal over Mr Gray’s offer of work she accepts lower-middle-class servantless housewifery and rejects leisure-class culture. Her rejection is complicated: professional promotion, although it would have brought her into contact with leisure-class culture again, would have involved borrowed prestige – Edna would have been serving, rather than socialising with, the leisure classes. Marital promotion, to a gentleman farmer, constitutes the genuine article. That she prefers doing her own housework to supervising others validates her decision.

Whilst Edna establishes the pleasure of servantless housewifery, the heroine of “Once A Butterfly” establishes its moral superiority to its leisured equivalent. Molly, formerly a London typist, married farmer Jim Davis for love, but misses London amusements and finds her domestic duties exhausting. She, like Edna, has been socially demoted: when she and Jim first married he could afford to provide her with “labour-saving devices” and “a helper in the kitchen”,

but their farm has since fallen on hard times and Molly now performs her chores unaided. “She scrubbed, churned, washed, ironed, bottled, cooked for the farm men; she got up early and stayed up late; she hoed in the garden; she went to town on numberless errands for Jim”.¹⁰⁷ Overcome by combining the work of a cook-general, gardener, and chauffeur, she breaks down and confesses to her mother-in-law that she would like to sell the farm and return to London; Mrs Davis, however, prescribes a rest and sends her to stay in London with her friend Ethel, hoping that life on the farm will contrast favourably with the latter’s domestic arrangements and lifestyle. Molly’s experience proves Mrs Davis correct. Ethel’s house is dark and poky, the vegetables she buys are expensive and poor quality compared to those grown by Molly, and her daily routine – domestic chores in the morning, followed by shopping in the afternoon and bridge in the evening – is tedious. Despite having both time and opportunities for amusements, Ethel clearly suffers from having too little work with which to occupy herself, cutting a listless, enervated figure as she does her housework wearing a kimono over her nightgown; Molly suspects her friend of doing “her best to string her few labours out over the longest period of time, so that she might not have too much time left on her hands”.¹⁰⁸ Molly’s holiday has the effect desired by Mrs Davis, and she returns to Jim actively looking forward to resuming her domestic duties.

The moral superiority of servantless to leisured housewifery in “Once A Butterfly” emerges when its narrative is considered in the context of *Woman and Labour*, Olive Schreiner’s 1911 plea for middle-class women to be allowed to

¹⁰⁷ M. B. Kibler, “Once A Butterfly,” *WW* 5 May 1928, 787-788.

¹⁰⁸ Kibler, “Butterfly,” 792.

take a more active professional role in society. Promoted by both “Once A Butterfly” and “The Story Of A Bad-Tempered Woman”, the models of the lower-middle-class home as a space for domestic productivity and the lower-middle-class housewife as domestic producer echo the models of home and housewife constructed by Schreiner in the broad historical overview she gives as explanation for housewives’ consumer status in early twentieth-century industrialised societies. Pre-industrialised housewives, she argues, farmed, cooked, spun, wove, doctored, and educated children whilst their menfolk hunted and fought; industrialism, relocating many of these productive labours away from the home, made increasing numbers of housewives redundant. Moreover, servants and mass-produced convenience products reduced the amount of labour required by housewives to feed and clothe their families, and medical and technological advances eliminated society’s need for copious childbearing – huge armies of soldiers and manual labourers were no longer required. Whilst previously only leisure-class housewives were affected by these changes, new mass-production technologies manufacturing cheap convenience goods are spreading this drop in status from domestic producer to domestic consumer amongst all but those working-class wives who contribute to their families’ coffers by working in paid jobs. Robbed of their social usefulness along with their labour, Schreiner believes, housewives have been forced into a state of “sex-parasitism” or complete dependence on their husbands, to whom all they have to offer in return for the means of survival is non-procreative sex. Effectively, leisured housewives have the same economic status as prostitutes.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ Olive Schreiner, *Woman and Labour* (London and Leipsic [sic]: T. Fisher Unwin, 1911), 33-68, 114-115.

The ‘moral evil’ associated by Schreiner with leisured housewifery surfaces in the characterisation of Molly’s friend Ethel, and Ethel’s idle, bridge-playing friends. Like Schreiner’s sex parasites, they live in London and have, at most, one child – their dislocation from childbearing is highlighted by one woman’s reference to “poor little Florrie” who, Molly is surprised to discover, is a Pomeranian dog, a luxury commodity-substitute for a daughter.¹¹⁰ Dressed in nightgown and kimono, Ethel brings an air of sexual dissipation to her morning’s housework, which she interrupts to discuss the previous evening’s amusements with her friends over the telephone.¹¹¹ Although Ethel’s sexual immorality is implied by her costume rather than stated explicitly, the narrative makes it clear that she and her friends are not fulfilling their proper social role.

Molly [...] had only known the busy life and fullness of life of a woman who is wife, mother, helpmate, partner, housekeeper and homemaker all in one [...] no drudgery, no work was vain or sordid that had for its purpose the mothering of healthy boys and girls, the raising of food for a hungry nation, the companionship of a worth-while man. She saw [...] these women as parasites.¹¹²

Juxtaposed with the image of Ethel working in her nightwear, and Ethel and her friends’ rejection of motherhood, the narrative’s likening of these idle, leisured housewives to parasites resonates strongly with Schreiner’s accusations of sexually immoral sex parasitism. Like Schreiner’s leisured housewives, these women are not working for their living and consequently, are failing to contribute to society. The narrative’s moral condemnation of their lack of hard work, implicit in its assertion that Molly’s domestic labours are *not* “vain or

¹¹⁰ Kibler, “Butterfly,” 794.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 792.

¹¹² Ibid., 794.

sordid”, directly counters *Woman’s Weekly*’s leisure-class conduct texts, its etiquette guides showing readers how to behave like leisure-class women, and its hand cream adverts, which help them to keep up physical appearances of domestic leisure. If “Once A Butterfly” and Olive Schreiner share their moral disapproval of leisured housewifery, however, their solutions to the problem differ. Schreiner uses her attitude towards domestic idleness to justify her call for middle-class wives to enter the paid labour market, claiming that by working in the public sphere they will contribute usefully to society as well as free themselves from dissolution by earning their own living;¹¹³ “Once A Butterfly”, on the other hand, uses its disapproval of domestic leisure to justify and make desirable a call for lower-middle-class wives to resume their pre-industrial role as domestic producers.¹¹⁴ Since *Woman’s Weekly* assumes that its working

¹¹³ “In the Woman’s Labour Movement of our day, which has essentially taken its rise among women of the more cultured and wealthy classes, and which consists mainly in a demand to have the doors leading to professional [...] and highly skilled labour thrown open to them, the ultimate end [...] will undoubtedly tend to the material and physical well-being of woman herself, as well as to that of her male companions” (Schreiner, *Woman*, 123-124). “Given a society in which the majority of women should be so far self-supporting, that, having their free share open to them in the modern fields of labour, marriage or some form of sexual sale was no more a matter of necessity to them [...] prostitution, using that term in its broadest sense to cover all forced sexual relationships based [...] on the necessitous acceptance by woman of material good in exchange for the exercise of her sexual functions, would be extinct” (ibid., 244-245).

¹¹⁴ In seeking to convince *Woman’s Weekly* readers of the moral superiority of domestic productivity to domestic leisure, “Once A Butterfly” resonates ideologically with the work of turn-of-the-nineteenth-century moralist and social reformer Hannah More and mid-nineteenth-century domestic advice writer Sarah Stickney Ellis. Both More and Ellis present domestic industry as morally edifying. More suggests that wives who work to keep their homes “attractive” and welcoming exert a positive moral influence over their husbands, and expresses concern that a lack of work combined with an excess of pleasure leads to “weariness, listlessness, and dejection” – feelings evidently experienced by “Once A Butterfly” anti-heroine Molly (Hannah More, *Coelebs in Search of a Wife* [Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1995 [1809]], 217; *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education* [London: printed for T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1799], 163-164). To Ellis, hardworking, productive housewives set a good example to other members of their household (*The Wives of England, their Relative Duties, Domestic Influence, & Social Obligations* [London: Fisher, Son, & Co., 1843], 254); serving others is a means of showing affection, and of cultivating affection towards oneself. Moreover, women who perform domestic services for family members gain the

readers are unmarried, this is entirely commensurate with its continued support of working readers.

Happy housewife heroines?

Some *Woman's Weekly* readers resist the magazine's idealised portrayals of domesticity, however. Their resistance shows, on a structural level, that the magazine has room for ideological debate as well as persuasion. Married readers who complain to Mrs Marryat about their husbands and having to give up paid work after marriage reject romance narratives persuading them that marriage and fulltime housewifery should be their *raison d'être*. I. S. L. is "bored" with her "unintelligent, uneducated" husband;¹¹⁵ Rosie complains that her husband "likes arguments and thinks he is right in everything";¹¹⁶ Molly B is "happily married" to a man she loves "dearly" but regrets her single lifestyle – "I can't help thinking of the past. Business girls have so much more freedom than married women, and better times".¹¹⁷ As with Mrs Marryat's conduct and etiquette queries, these letters' inclusion indicates that her advice will be more broadly relevant; readers' domestic discontent is, evidently, believed to be more widespread. Mrs Marryat's conservative solutions (I. S. L. should remain married, Rosie should get more fresh air, and Molly B should take a tonic and apply herself to housework) suggest that she is eager for readers to conform to

moral authority to influence the latter's own morals. Like More, Ellis argues that domestic idleness can cause enervation – "[i]t is a most painful spectacle [...] to see [...] daughters elegantly dressed, reclining at their ease [...] never dreaming of their responsibilities; but, as a necessary consequence of their neglect of duty, growing weary of their useless lives, laying hold of every newly invented simulant to rouse their drooping energies" (*The Women of England, their Social Duties, and Domestic Habits* [London: Fisher, Son, & Co., 1847], 167-188, 210, 242).

¹¹⁵ "Mrs Marryat Advises," WW 3 Nov 1928, 823.

¹¹⁶ "Mrs Marryat Advises," WW 1 Sept 1928, 384.

¹¹⁷ "Mrs Marryat Advises," WW 7 Jul 1928, 39.

the domestic ideologies supporting *Woman's Weekly's* romance narratives.

Romance stories also acknowledge and offer solutions to difficult aspects of full-time servantless housewifery. Readers feeling socially isolated in suburbia could identify with Landra, spending “lonely, monotonous days” in her home “on the outskirts of town” whilst her husband Barry is at work;¹¹⁸ it is even hinted that widowed mother Edna, struggling to balance earning a living with the demands of raising two young children, hits her offspring in a moment of despair –

she rushed toward Bobbie. . . . Then she grasped the back of a chair, suddenly exhausted. [...] She must have punished the children, for both of them were crying.¹¹⁹

The threat of fulltime housewifery provides Charlie with an incentive for leaving home and taking a typing job in London –

‘I’ve got to get away. [...] If I stay, I might marry Arthur Baxter.’ She had a dull vision of herself, sitting all her life in a grim house [...] bending over endless dishes, caring for children who would grow up and rear more children, all in a vicious circle.¹²⁰

Landra receives praise for keeping house while Barry earns promotion at work from a wealthy aunt, who gives them a cheque to tide them over in the meantime; Edna marries a gentleman farmer, so can stop paid work and care for her children full time; Charlie marries a self-made millionaire, who will presumably buy her out of the “grim” future of dishwashing and childrearing she fears. To the extent that Landra, Edna, and Charlie will remain or become housewives, therefore, the solutions offered by these narratives are as

¹¹⁸ Beatrice Redpath, “Your Head And Your Heart Well Up,” *WW* 1 Sept 1928, 351-356.

¹¹⁹ Irene Merrill Mason, “The Story Of A Bad-Tempered Woman,” *WW* 30 Nov 1928, 781.

¹²⁰ Penelope Russ, “Rich man, Poor Man,” *WW* 6 Oct 1928, 568.

conservative as those given by Mrs Marryat to her discontented correspondents. That these solutions are also unrealistic fantasies of glamorised domesticity, however, may also perhaps acknowledge that *Woman's Weekly* cannot offer bored housewives a more practical alternative within its ideological parameters. To married readers anxious to be not working class, Schreiner's solution of paid employment is not tenable. Although the magazine's fictional romances engage thus with real-life issues, the best they can offer readers is an imagined escape from their very real unhappiness.

Conclusion

Broadly, the lower-middle-class domestic culture constructed by *Woman's Weekly* during 1928 can be defined by what it is not. Not working class; not comfortably middle class, although aspiring to be; ranked socially higher than readers of *Peg's Paper* and *My Weekly*, but lower than readers of *Good Housekeeping*, the magazine's housewife and working readers remain in transition. As during 1918 and 1919, lower-middle-class culture in *Woman's Weekly* is distinguished by simultaneous and conflicting desires to acquire and reject leisure-class cultural distinctions. Openly and even proudly undertaking housework without servants' help, readers distinguish themselves from leisured housewives of whom they morally disapprove; anxious to disguise the effects of rough housework on their hands and eager to become *au fait* with leisure-class holiday customs, they seek, however, to join the latter's ranks, or at least to appear to join them. The increasing social confidence of their class surfaces in the magazine's self-made *Bildungsroman* romance heroes, whose quests for self-

activated upward mobility also point to the continuing recovery of British masculinity from the devastating impact of the First World War.

During 1928, the year in which its target readership voted in a general election for the first time, *Woman's Weekly* does not engage in governmental politics. This lack of engagement is examined further in Chapter Three, which, focusing on magazines issued between September 1938 and September 1939, explores how it addresses the possibility that Britain could soon be fighting another war.

Chapter Three: Ready for War

September 1938-September 1939

In September 1938, Britain was one year away from declaring war on Hitler's Germany and, throughout the following twelve months, preparations for a possible conflict proceeded apace. Public and domestic shelters were built in anticipation of heavy air raids; anti-aircraft batteries were strengthened; the ARP (Air Raid Precautions) programme recruited professionals and volunteers into the emergency services; in October, following the Munich Crisis, gas masks were issued to civilians, and in May, the Military Training Act introduced compulsory conscription for twenty- and twenty-one-year-old men.¹ Somewhat less publically, government officials prepared to evacuate children and vulnerable adults from cities into the countryside, and contingencies for food rationing were put into place.² Amidst these preparations however, *Woman's Weekly* seems to be carrying on much as usual. Still displaying scant explicit interest in current affairs, the magazine remains interested principally in its readers' work and leisure; presumably with an eye towards sales figures, its target demographic remains diverse in terms of age and occupation.³ Whilst *Woman's Weekly's*

¹ Robert Mackay, *Half the Battle: Civilian Morale in Britain during the Second World War* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2002), 30-37.

² Mackay, *Battle*, 32, 38.

³ Sanitary towel adverts, and adverts for baby-care products and grey hair treatments address both younger and more mature women (e.g. advert, "Mene" sanitary towels, WW 7 Jan 1928, 33; advert, "Johnson's Baby Powder," WW 4 Feb 1928, 201; advert, "Inecto" grey hair colourant, WW 7 Apr 1928, iii). Whilst cookery, knitting, dressmaking, and childcare features continue *Woman's Weekly's* assumption that the majority of its readers are housewives, letters pages and the occasional pattern for "office" clothing continue to acknowledge and support those working in paid employment (Beauty Expert, "The Best Beauty Hints!" WW 7 Jan 1939, 2; "Mrs Marryat Advises," WW 12 Nov 1938, 1027; BE, "Beauty Hints For You," WW 7 Oct 1939, 710; "Simple Sewing For The Beginner," WW 1 Oct 1938, 632).

concerns and target demographic do not appear to have altered since 1928, its status in the domestic magazine market has shifted slightly. Costing just 3½d per issue, the magazine remains within the market's cheaper bracket, but since the cover price of budget 2d weeklies *Peg's Paper* and *My Weekly* has not risen, it is now 1½d more expensive than these comparative titles. This rise in cover price, which distinguishes *Woman's Weekly* readers from their working-class counterparts by size of income, is perhaps indicative of the interwar lower middle classes' rise in economic status. That the latter nevertheless remain in relatively close cultural proximity to the working classes is suggested, this chapter will argue, by similarities between all three titles' approaches to addressing the prospect of conflict.

The first half of this chapter will focus on *Woman's Weekly*'s responses to Britain's war preparations between September 1938 and September 1939. Outwardly, the magazine avoids confronting the prospect of another European conflict directly; it is, however, possible to discern hints in its escapist discourses that Britain may soon be fighting another war. Probing these hints, this chapter is divided into the following sections. "Don't mention the war" suggests that the magazine's evident reluctance to engage openly with the possibility of conflict is a deliberate decision on the part of its editors, with implications for how they classify their readers' social status. "War heroes and heroines" discusses oblique reassurances made by the magazine's fiction that British men are once more ready to bear arms for their country, and that the nation's women are ready to support them; "Our Friendly Philosopher" introduces *Woman's Weekly*'s masculine columnist The Man Who Sees, whose persona and presence in the magazine offer readers further reassurance that men have recovered from the

impact of the First World War. Sidestepping away from issues surrounding the approaching conflict, “How To Acquire Culture” examines *Woman’s Weekly* readers’ relations to status-designating ‘high’ culture through a middlebrow lens; “Culture and citizenship” examines how, in learning to ‘read’ cultural works, they engage with liberal humanist notions of citizenship propounded by F. R. Leavis and Denys Thompson in their mid-interwar pedagogical text, *Culture and Environment* (1933). “Moral citizens” surveys The Man Who Sees’ “Culture” series within the context of European politics, comparing it to similar features in American publication *Reader’s Digest*, which was available in the UK; finally, this chapter explores how, through aspiring to become citizens of The Man Who Sees’ ideal society, *Woman’s Weekly* readers prepare to discharge one aspect of their own war service. As in previous chapters, strategic comparisons to *Peg’s Paper*, *My Weekly*, and *Good Housekeeping* will help to designate *Woman’s Weekly* and its target readers as lower middle class during the year leading up to the outbreak of the Second World War.

Don’t mention the war

Between September 1938 and September 1939, *Woman’s Weekly* confronts the possibility that Britain could soon be at war, for the most part, with silence. Flipping through magazines printed during that year, it is virtually impossible to find explicit references to the prospect of conflict within the advertisements, advice columns, craft projects, and fiction comprising the bulk of its copy: two adverts, one promising that Nipits lozenges will protect against colds on ARP duty and the other picturing uniformed men smoking Capstan cigarettes, and a letter to Mrs Marryat from Blue Eyes, who is uncertain whether or not she should

date a pilot in the RAF, are exceptional.⁴ *Woman's Weekly* shares its silence with *Peg's Paper* and *My Weekly*. Like the former, both titles print much the same material as they did during 1928, *My Weekly* focusing on romance fiction with a limited amount of domestic advice, and *Peg's Paper* on sensational romance stories, cinema gossip, and cosmology; aside from a tiny handful of adverts in *My Weekly*⁵ and a few letters to agony aunts in both,⁶ explicit references to the prospect of war are, with hindsight, conspicuously absent. In all likelihood, the lack of interest shown by *Woman's Weekly*, *Peg's Paper*, and *My Weekly* in European politics and Britain's war preparations reflects a conscious decision by their editors to avoid publishing material that could worry or upset readers. As Mass Observation contributor Miss Smith wrote of the Munich Crisis, "I avoid

⁴ Advert, "Nipits," *WW* 7 Jan 1939, 28; advert, "Capstan," *WW* 29 Jan 1939, iii; "Mrs Marryat Advises," *WW* 8 Apr 1939, 723.

⁵ *My Weekly* prints one advert for L'Onglex nail polish and two for Eiffel Tower lemonade featuring men in military uniform – a fourth assures readers that Lilia sanitary towels will enable them to perform national service whilst menstruating (advert, "L'Onglex," *MW* 24 Sept 1938, 475; advert, "Eiffel Tower," *MW* w/e 27 May 1939, 18; advert, "Eiffel Tower," *MW* w/e 3 Jun 1939, 16; advert, "Lilia," *MW* 11 Feb 1939, 39).

⁶ *My Weekly's* Barbara advises Bob, who would like to join the RAF, and Worried Eighteen, who is concerned about her ability to remain faithful to her boyfriend who is shortly to be posted abroad ("Tell it to Barbara!" *MW* 31 Dec 1938, 1009; *MW* 14 Jan 1939, 77-78); *Peg's Paper's* Madame Sunya, a clairvoyant, advises Mary Lou to wait for her Palestine-bound boyfriend, and assures Worried Grey Eyes that she may marry her boyfriend in the air force, "but not for another three to five years" ("Let the Stars solve your Problems," *PP* 19 Aug 1939, 21; *PP* 29 Jul 1939, 32). With hindsight, the latter prediction (probably based on the length of the First World War) is not far from correct. Like Barbara, Madame Sunya responds to male as well as female correspondents, telling twenty- and twenty-one-year-old brothers Dick and Jack that she sees them "both wearing a uniform of some kind and being among a lot of people in strange parts" – should war break out, a reasonably safe assumption for the immediate fate of two young men of call-up age ("Let the Stars solve your Problems," *PP* 15 Jul 1939, 20). These letters indicate that, as during the First World War, citizens' experiences of the conflict will depend partly on their gender; Worried Eighteen, Mary Lou, and Worried Grey Eyes' romantic dilemmas suggest that British couples are beginning to be affected by the prolonged separations caused by national service, the potential impact of which, as Chapter Four will argue, will become a source of considerable anxiety in *Woman's Weekly* throughout the conflict. Confronting the prospect of being parted from their boyfriends for lengthy periods of time, these correspondents seek reassurance that they will eventually be permanently reunited: that their real-life romances will end happily.

discussing the situation for this heightens my distress”.⁷ By avoiding overt reference to the war, therefore, all three titles offer their readers discursive sanctuary from potentially distressing current affairs, repurposing their provision of romantic escapism from the daily grind in doing so.

That *Woman's Weekly*, *Peg's Paper*, and *My Weekly*'s provision of escapism from the prospect of war may be indicative of their readers' lower-class status is suggested by comparison to *Good Housekeeping*. Openly confronting the possibility that Britain could soon be at war, the more upmarket one-shilling domestic glossy displays fewer scruples about upsetting its readers, printing, between September 1938 and September 1939, articles discussing air raid defences and evacuation, the impact of war on the financial markets, and forms of women's national service;⁸ even everyday domestic matters are given a European political dimension, by a feature discussing its writer's experiences of housekeeping in Mussolini's Italy and Hitler's Germany.⁹ The risk of having one's "correspondence, visitors and other details of daily intercourse [...] reported to some Nazi chief by an over-zealous house-servant" gives the *Servant Problem* a sinister twist in the latter state.¹⁰ Whilst it would be unfair to classify readers of *Woman's Weekly*, *Peg's Paper*, and *My Weekly* as 'lower class' purely on the grounds that they do not wish to engage with current affairs in these particular publications, *Good Housekeeping*'s eagerness to discuss politics does bespeak a more self-consciously educated readership. *Woman's Weekly*'s

⁷ Dorothy Sheridan, *Wartime Women: A Mass-Observation Anthology, 1937-45* (London: Phoenix Press, 2000), 29.

⁸ Helena Normanton, "The World as it Passes," *GH* Dec 1938, 68-69; Securitas, "Leaves from the Case-Book of an Investment Counsel," *GH* Dec 1938, 128-130; Helena Normanton, "The World as it Passes," Apr 1939, 136.

⁹ Lilian T. Mowrer, "Housekeeping through Europe," *GH* Nov 1938, 10-11, 84.

¹⁰ Mowrer, "Housekeeping," 84.

apparent decision not to mention the war (overtly) suggests that it continues to classify readers, between September 1938 and September 1939, as not quite middle class.

But despite *Woman's Weekly's* concerted effort to avoid confronting the prospect of war directly, indications that Britain could soon be fighting another European conflict are discernible between the lines of its escapist discourses. Among these indications is the appearance of weekly horoscopes, new to the magazine since 1928, which, hinting that its readers desire to believe in a secure, determined future, suggest that they may be anxious in the present.¹¹ Their desire to 'read ahead' seems to have been shared by a significant number of Britons during the later interwar years: almost every mass-produced newspaper featured at least one horoscope during the late 1930s, and several also housed a regular clairvoyant.¹² In their 1940 biography of the interwar period, *The Long Week-end*, Robert Graves and Alan Hodge associate horoscopes' mass popularity directly with concerns related to the prospect of war, citing their apparently "highly soothing influence" on an anxious populace, and quoting an observation in the *Spectator* magazine that, during "[t]imes of fear and doubt [...] men and women seek to lift the veil off the future and find guidance and reassurance concerning things to come".¹³ Printed alongside *Woman's Weekly's* romance

¹¹ E.g. "Your Luck This Week," WW 3 Sept 1938, 464.

¹² Ross McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures: England 1918-1951* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 291.

¹³ Robert Graves and Alan Hodge, *The Long Week-end: A Social History of Great Britain* (Aylesbury: BPC Hazell Books), 430-431. Britain's interest in fortune telling was not limited to readers of mass publications, however. During the Second World War, the War Office employed a fulltime astrologer to keep them informed about what astrologers employed by Hitler, Mussolini, Goebbels, and Goring would be telling them (Edna Aphek and Yishai Tobin, *The Semiotics of Fortune-telling* [Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company], 1990, 177).

discourses, horoscopes seem to reflect readers' desire for security, and offer romantic reassurance that events in real life will have a happy ending.

Woman's Weekly's presumably war-related interest in horoscopes emerges as distinctively working class through comparison to other magazines. Fate and fortune remains a chief attraction of *Peg's Paper*, which features a number of psychic columnists between September 1938 and September 1939: these include agony aunt Madame Sunya, who answers readers' questions about their (mostly romantic) futures,¹⁴ "famous clairvoyante [*sic*]" Nell St John Montague,¹⁵ who considers the influence of semi-precious stones over readers' love lives, and Gypsy Holmes, who explores the significance of names.¹⁶ *Good Housekeeping*, however, prints no horoscopes at all, and even denounces those appearing in a "widely circulated daily newspaper" as "indefinite and vague".¹⁷ Since cosmology seems to have been especially popular amongst working-class wives in interwar Britain, *Good Housekeeping's* dismissal of fortune telling may well be a means of achieving distance between itself and publications like *Peg's Paper*, and its readers and women who read the latter.¹⁸ Obscure and cursory, their column space confined to considerably less than a quarter of a page, *Woman's Weekly's* horoscopes lack the status afforded *Peg's Paper's* more detailed and lengthy cosmology features (Fig. 12). Their presence in the magazine, however, suggests that its readers have, on the brink of the Second World War, yet to fully achieve middle-class status in the eyes of its producers.

¹⁴ E.g. Madame Sunya, "Let the Stars solve your Problems," *PP* 15 Jul 1939, 19-20.

¹⁵ Nell St John Montague, "Rubies Win Love," *PP* 10 Sept 1938, 11-12. Nell St John Montague authored *The Red Fortune Book* (1924), *Revelations of a Society Clairvoyante* (1926), and *The Poison Trail* (1930).

¹⁶ E.g. Gypsy Holmes, "Is Your Name Here?" *PP* 24 Sept 1938, 30.

¹⁷ St. John Ervine, "Tell your fortune, Lady?" *GH* Feb 1939, 29.

¹⁸ McKibbin, *Classes*, 292.

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Fig. 12. *Peg's Paper* horoscopes fill a whole page; *Woman's Weekly's* are squeezed in between adverts and part of a story ("Let The Stars Solve Your Problems," *PP* 24 Jun 1939, 17; "Your Luck This Week," *WW* 5 Nov 1938, 956).

War heroes and heroines

Woman's Weekly romance fiction, too, avoids direct mention of Britain's preparations for possible war. Margaret Dale's complete story "In The Dark" is the sole exception, introducing its heroine to her hero, a doctor, during an ARP first aid practice organised by the latter.¹⁹ Whilst explicitly this presumably deliberate omission of 'war talk' from *Woman's Weekly* romance fiction secures the magazine's provision of escapism from the concerning present, implicitly, romance stories reassure its readers that, should war break out, Britain is in strong hands: the physical and psychological condition of its heroes, vastly improved since 1928, implies that British masculinity has fully recovered from the First World War and is ready to bear arms once again. The impact of conflict on fictional depictions of masculinity in *Woman's Weekly* emerged as a theme of this study in Chapter One, which addressed heroes' characterisation during the year immediately following the Armistice: despite their battlefield injuries, and hints that the 'shellshocked' male psychological brittleness identified by Humble and Dixon in interwar middlebrow and popular romance fiction was developing, romance stories in the magazine insisted that the war's impact on male veterans

¹⁹ Margaret Dale, "In The Dark," *WW* 11 Feb 1939, 227-228.

would be impermanent and brief. This proved optimistic: as Chapter Two argued, the boyishness of some 1928 heroes, and their need of ‘mothering’ by competent heroines, implied that by the middle of the interwar period masculinity had yet to recover fully from the conflict’s devastating effects. The following section of this chapter will suggest that, during the year leading up to Britain’s entry into the Second World War, heroes of *Woman’s Weekly* romance fiction demonstrate that they are once again physically and psychologically capable of bearing arms in defence of their country. Furthermore, heroines, rather than becoming more vulnerably ‘feminine’ in response to heroes’ recovery, have retained the competence they gained during the aftermath of the First World War: independent and capable, they imply that women are ready to fight alongside men, although within certain gendered parameters. In reassuring *Woman’s Weekly* readers that British men and women are fit to perform national service, the magazine’s romance fiction engages with ‘real life’ on two levels. Broadly, it shows – again – that this so-called unrealistic genre can, and does, address real-life issues. More specifically, by disseminating officially endorsed ideals of masculine fitness, which relate to the health culture movement and potentially have links to militarism, *Woman’s Weekly* romance stories pre-empt the magazine’s wartime propaganda function.

In signalling British men’s renewed ability to fight during 1938 and 1939, *Woman’s Weekly* romances seem to diverge from contemporary middlebrow novels. This divergence emerges through comparison between the characterisation of *Woman’s Weekly* heroes, and male characters in the middlebrow novels surveyed by Humble. In her exploration of masculinity in interwar feminine middlebrow fiction, Humble does not discuss whether or not

male characters became any less psychologically brittle with the approach of the Second World War during the late 1930s; indeed, observing that “the ambivalent gender identities of [...] inter-war fiction” remain “clearly apparent” in novels published during the 1940s and early 1950s, she seems to confirm an absence of change during the approach of hostilities.²⁰ Offering a potentially more nuanced depiction of masculinity across the interwar period than that given by contemporary novels, *Woman’s Weekly* romances suggest that magazine fiction, published weekly, can function as a more accurate barometer of contemporary attitudes and anxieties than novels.

Woman’s Weekly romance heroes’ physical readiness to fight in another conflict emerges in their fit, healthy bodies and vigorous athleticism. Virtually each one surveyed for this chapter is described as being tall; most have broad shoulders, long legs, and lean or slender figures.²¹ Rowing, riding, roping cattle, or dancing with a “beautiful smoothness” indicative of their complete mastery over their “superlative” bodies, they embody a fictional model of masculinity in peak physical condition, fully recovered from the damage it sustained during the

²⁰ Nicola Humble, *The Feminine Middlebrow Novel, 1920s to 1950s: Class, Domesticity, and Bohemianism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 246.

²¹ Dr Jerry Smith is “broad-shouldered, slender” and “tall, lean” (Loretta Burrough, “The Girl Who Showed Off,” *WW* 5 Nov 1938, 917, 919; Dr Robert Quinney has “broad shoulders” and “long legs” (Margaret Baumann, “The Farmer’s Niece,” *WW* 1 Apr 1939, 623, 659); Buff Cole has “massive measurements” (Janet Adams, “No Higher Than His Heart,” *WW* 1 Jul 1939, 4); Robert Austin is “big and tall” (Beryl Gray, “No Dad, No Dog,” *WW* 17 Sept 1939, 517; Dr Peter More has a “great height” (Estella Martin, “Her Name Is Mary,” 5 Aug 1939, 264); Lyell Desmond is “tall” (Doris Creese, “Sister Of The Bridegroom,” *WW* 9 Aug 1939, 362); Ian Ferguson is “tall” (“Pity The Elder Sister!” *WW* 12 Aug 1939, 325); Allen is “tall” (Gwen Thomas, “The Doormat,” *WW* 29 Jul 1939, 212); Nicholas Crosbie is “tall and slim” (Lady Troubridge, “Nice People,” *WW* 22 Jul 1939, 161); Basil Rouncivell is “the tallest man in the room” (Peggy Tomlinson, “Kiss Me Goodbye,” *WW* 14 Jan 1939, 39); Roger Thomas is “very tall” (Estella Martin, “Singing For Their Supper,” *WW* 21 Jan 1939, 89); Donald Hardcastle is “tall” (Lady Troubridge, “Alice Blue Gown,” *WW* 28 Jan 1939, 134).

First World War.²² Besides hinting at real-world men's ability to fight, these devastatingly fit romance heroes seem to be limbering up for their own war service. With their strong, lithe, healthy physiques, they foreshadow the "soldier heroes" of inspiring narratives in the popular press, which, during the approaching conflict, would emphasise the "bravery, physical strength and endurance" of men serving on the home front (as firemen or munitions workers, for instance) as well as those in the armed forces.²³ By thus preparing to disseminate official wartime gender narratives amongst *Woman's Weekly's* mass readership, these heroes prepare the magazine for its own war duty, as well as their real-life counterparts for theirs.

Woman's Weekly romance heroes' robust physicality reflects an intensification of interest in the nation's health that took place during the late 1930s. The physical culture movement, popular since the 1890s, was associated during the interwar years with the restoration of war-damaged masculinity;²⁴ from 1937, the government-organised National Fitness Campaign, promoted as a means of bettering personal and national wellbeing, aimed "to improve standards of fitness".²⁵ Aimed primarily at adults, the National Fitness Campaign was initiated in response to Britain's disappointing performance in the 1936 Berlin Olympics, at which successful German athletes showcased the Nazis' "Strength

²² Lady Troubridge, "Alice Blue Gown," WW 28 Jan 1939, 134.

²³ Sonya O. Rose, "Temperate Heroes: Concepts of Masculinity in Second World War Britain," in *Masculinities in Politics and War: Gendering Modern History*, ed. Stefan Dudink et al. (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press), 182-184.

²⁴ Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, "Building a British Superman: Physical Culture in Interwar Britain," *Journal of Contemporary History* Volume 41, Number 4 (2006): 601.

²⁵ Zweiniger-Bargielowska, "Superman," 606-608; Kevin Jeffreys, *Sport and Politics in Modern Britain: The Road to 2012* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 4.

through Joy” programme.²⁶ There is some disagreement over the extent to which British efforts to improve national fitness were motivated, as they were in Germany, by the prospect of raising an army. Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska believes not, citing ministerial insistence that the Campaign’s purpose was non-militaristic and that participation would be voluntary;²⁷ Gordon Marino disagrees however, observing that, although participation was ostensibly voluntary, a vigorous propaganda campaign for the scheme, which featured public endorsements by the king and prime minister, made it citizens’ “loyal duty to engage in physical activity”.²⁸ Endorsing interpretations of both non-militaristic and militaristic intent, Olympic and battlefield fitness coalesce in the physical appearance of *Woman’s Weekly* hero David Hume, whose “lean, brown” body – “alert, like a bowstring drawn back ready to release any amount of arrows” – recalls archery, both a sport and a form of combat.²⁹ Like David, most *Woman’s Weekly* romance heroes appearing between September 1938 and September 1939 have tanned skin, implying that they spend plenty of time engaged in healthful outdoor pursuits. Marino observes that, during the late 1930s, cinema newsreels circulated images of “tanned and muscular men exercising shirtless” in a bid to promote the government’s campaign to improve national fitness.³⁰ Although prevented by propriety from removing their shirts, *Woman’s Weekly*’s fit, tanned heroes embody this government-endorsed masculine ideal: functioning as objects of female sexual desire in a mass-produced magazine, these men ‘do their bit’ for

²⁶ Zweiniger-Bargielowska, “Superman,” 606-607.

²⁷ Ibid., 607.

²⁸ Gordon Marino, “Preparing the Boys for War – Compulsion or Coercion? Physical Education and Training, 1919-1939,” *History of Education Researcher* Number 92 (2013): 47.

²⁹ Lady Troubridge, “Darling Stevie,” *WW* 9 Sept 1939, 506.

³⁰ Marino, “Preparing,” 49-50.

this ideal's dissemination and popularisation. If the heath culture movement did indeed gain a militaristic purpose during the late 1930s, then *Woman's Weekly* heroes are complicit in raising Britain's army.

Woman's Weekly heroes' robust physicality is matched by psychological strength, which materialises in their authoritarian demeanour and behaviour. Stern and commanding, they show no symptoms of the shellshock that made them seem boyish during 1928. "His mouth was unyielding and stubborn; it had a kind of sternness [...] about it";³¹ "[h]e had a firm mouth, a square, obstinate chin";³² "when Robert Quinney lays down the law everyone obeys, even those who think they know better!"³³ Britain's coming need for authoritative masculinity surfaces in *Woman's Weekly* romance fiction in the plight of young widowed mothers of wayward sons in evident need of paternal guidance. Two headmasters of boys' boarding schools fulfil this role, Stephen Hawley marrying governess Frances Lane to provide orphaned "imp" Timothy with a secure home, and David Hume marrying Anne Merriot, whose son Stephen runs away from school.³⁴ Bank manager Jim Milton is disappointed to discover that his fiancé Margaret's son Tony is self-centred, boastful, and a poor sportsman, and spans him when he throws a tantrum after being (correctly) accused of cheating at cricket. Margaret, furious, breaks off their engagement, but relents after Jim teaches Tony to play the game fairly whilst she is in hospital.³⁵ To the extent that Jim and Margaret's romance seems to endorse corporal punishment of children,

³¹ Jane England, "Goose Girl," *WW* 2 Sept 1939, 452-453.

³² Lady Troubridge, "Darling Stevie," *WW* 9 Sept 1939, 506.

³³ Margaret Baumann, "The Farmer's Niece," *WW* 1 Apr 1939, 625.

³⁴ Nancy Shaw, "More Than Kind," *WW* 4 Mar 1939, 391-396, 440; Lady Troubridge, "Darling Stevie," *WW* 9 Sept 1939, 505-508, 510, 532, 535-536, 539-540, 543.

³⁵ Phyllis Denham, "The Lights Were Switched On," *WW* 4 Feb 1939, 177-180, 182, 204, 207-208, 211.

its narrative may seem problematic to twenty-first-century readers; it does, however, make desirable an assertive, disciplinarian form of masculinity associated with strong leadership, which may have been deemed comforting to readers anxious about the possibility of war. Moreover, Tony's assimilation of 'correct' conduct through cricket alludes to contemporary educationalists' "widespread" belief that exercise was morally as well as physically beneficial.³⁶ *Woman's Weekly's* fit, healthy heroes are strong in character as well as in body.

Woman's Weekly heroes have regained the physical and psychological authority that was damaged by the First World War, but their heroines have lost none of the competency they gained during and after the conflict. Subordinate but not submissive to heroes with whom they form good working relationships, they prepare women to fight alongside men during the approaching war.

Anticipating one form of women's war service, two nurse-heroines demonstrate their ability to work as competent partners. When one of Dr Jerry Smith's islander patients goes into labour in the middle of a violent storm, a sprained wrist prevents him from operating his boat – Christy volunteers to take him, bravely piloting her speedboat through heaving waves and treacherous rocks before assisting with the birth itself.³⁷ Jerry's marriage proposal, made whilst Christy cleans the baby she has helped deliver, rewards her capability, and demonstrates the strength of their partnership.³⁸ Similarly, Dr Peter Moore rewards nurse Mary for her professional competency and teamwork with the promise of his hand.³⁹ "No Higher Than His Heart" combines romance with

³⁶ Marino, "Preparing," 43.

³⁷ Loretta Burrough, "The Girl Who Showed Off," *WW* 5 Nov 1938, 954-955.

³⁸ Burrough, "The Girl," 955.

³⁹ Estella Martin, "Her Name Is Mary," *WW* 5 Aug 1939, 266.

another popular genre, the Western, to explore working relations between men and women. At the beginning of the narrative, heroine Lucia is determined to separate from her husband, cowboy Buff Cole: lacking the practical skills to work on the Cole family's cattle ranch, she is sick of being treated as a useless accessory by Buff and his cowgirl sister Margaret, and plans to return to city life.⁴⁰ Her misery is compounded by Buff's unromantic, proprietary attitude towards her, and his demeaning nickname, Gadget, which reflects her small stature.⁴¹ Lucia's planned escape has to be postponed, however, following the unexpected arrival of Buff's friend Jimmy. Jimmy is attracted to Margaret and, despite being discomforted by the apparently unwomanly fearlessness with which she ropes an injured bull, hints to Lucia that he plans to marry her and buy a ranch of his own.⁴² During a mountain-climbing expedition, Jimmy falls and is badly injured. Lucia insists on remaining with him overnight, and in doing so, shows Buff that, despite her smallness and inability to rope cattle, she is courageous, capable, and deserving of his respect – "[h]e promoted her from playmate to partner there on the mountainside". Conversely, Margaret, who responds to the accident by breaking down and confessing to being terrified of heights, shows Jimmy that she is a 'woman' after all. Buff fetches help, Jimmy recovers, and both couples prepare to live happily ever after on their respective ranches.⁴³ To the extent that Lucia's courageousness debunks Buff's patronising attitude, "No Higher Than His Heart" is a clamouring endorsement for women's ability to "partner" men in dangerous situations. Nevertheless, the narrative

⁴⁰ Janet Adams, "No Higher Than His Heart," *WW* 1 Jul 1939, 3-5.

⁴¹ Adams, "No Higher," 4-5.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 36.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 42.

imposes parameters on feminine competency, suggesting that, whilst partnership is commendable, women should not attempt to be men's equals or competitors – Margaret's strength must be tempered before she is permitted to marry Jimmy, who "had only needed to know who would be boss before he ordered the wedding bells".⁴⁴ Jimmy's concern that his own status could be threatened by too courageous a wife anticipates wartime anxieties that women could be defeminised by national service: anxieties that *Woman's Weekly*, Chapter Four will argue, attempts to calm. In preparing the magazine's readers to perform their national duty, "No Higher Than His Heart" also prepares them to accept their continued subordinate status in relation to men during a time when the competency they developed during and following the First World War would be redeployed in the service of their country.

Our Friendly Philosopher

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⁴⁴

Ibid.

Fig. 13. The Man Who Sees (The Man Who Sees, “What Is A Scale Of Values?” WW 8 Jul 1939, 64).

Further oblique reassurance that British masculinity has regained the authority it lost during the First World War is offered by The Man Who Sees, *Woman's Weekly's* masculine columnist. The Man Who Sees entered *Woman's Weekly* during 1936: named for his observational abilities, he offers a specifically masculine insight into a range of female personal conduct issues, and his visibly high status and ‘intimate friendship’ with the magazine’s readers suggest that his views are supposed to be taken seriously. The Man is presented as a figure of considerable authority and trust. Unusually, his columns always feature pictorial representations of their writer himself, which suggests that his relations with *Woman's Weekly* readers are intended to be more personal than those cultivated by, for instance, fashion columnist The London Girl or cook and domestic columnist Cecile; agony aunt Mrs Marryat, who intervenes directly in readers’ lives by responding to personal queries, is the only other named columnist to feature visually in the magazine during the years surveyed for this study. But whereas the pen-and-ink drawings depicting Mrs Marryat are modest in number and scope, reused multiple times, and always showing her seated at the same desk wearing the same expression, The Man Who Sees has an extensive repertoire of portraits, painted in extravagant wash and ink, which show him in a variety of poses and sometimes even present him in a situation specific to a particular column’s theme. Usually dressed in a three-piece suit, seldom pictured without his pipe, his still-plentiful slicked-back hair greying at the temples, and his smile frank and good-humoured beneath a paternal moustache, he is

fashioned in the image of a trusted family doctor or solicitor, and oozes late-middle-aged, established-middle-class masculine respectability: his values, these portraits suggest, are unimpeachable, and his advice, sound. The Man's familiar, sometimes even mildly flirtatious modes of address ("you darlings") make his interactions with *Woman's Weekly* readers seem intimate, and he even appears to interact with some in person, by engaging them in imaginary dialogue and referring to letters he claims to have received – although since he authors these voices himself, the actual extent of this intimacy is questionable.⁴⁵ For all his efforts to establish close personal relations with readers, however, The Man remains an enigma. "The Man Who Sees is the Nom de plume which covers the identity of a Well-Known Writer" claims the tagline of each weekly column, alluding to the authority of celebrated authorship:⁴⁶ in fact, 'his' columns may have been written by a number of writers, not necessarily male, whose identities have sadly disappeared with *Woman's Weekly*'s interwar editorial records. Nevertheless, whoever 'he' was, The Man Who Sees, like The London Girl, Cecile, and Mrs Marryat, provides *Woman's Weekly* readers with continuity between multiple issues, and a point of personal contact with the publication.

The Man Who Sees flexes his authority chiefly by seeking to govern *Woman's Weekly* readers' personal conduct. Presented by taglines as the writings of a philosopher, his weekly "Talks" function largely as a moral lifestyle guide, addressing issues including dating, marital trust, and contentment:⁴⁷ appealing

⁴⁵ The Man discusses writing with 'readers' Miss Brown, Miss Jones, and Miss Robinson (The Man Who Sees, "The Test of Good Writing," WW 6 May 1939, 910-911, 944); he summarises rather than quotes directly from readers' letters he claims to have received ("Peace On Earth," WW 3 Dec 1938, 1156).

⁴⁶ E.g. The Man Who Sees, "Visiting A Picture Gallery," WW 7 Jan 1939, 10.

⁴⁷ The Man Who Sees, "Lessons For Sweethearts," WW 5 Nov 1938, 922-923; TMWS, "Two Major Domestic Crimes," WW 17 Dec 1938, 1274-1275; TMWS "The Long Long Trail," WW 11 Mar 1939, 450-451.

variously to young unmarried women, housewives, women in paid employment, mothers of young children, and elderly women, they reflect the diversity of *Woman's Weekly's* target demographic. Advice from a mature male authority figure seems to be a selling point for popular domestic magazines during 1939, for by that year both *Peg's Paper* and *My Weekly* also feature masculine conduct columnists. Peg's Man Pal is a well-established figure, having advised *Peg's Paper* readers during 1928, but *My Weekly's* The Looker On makes his debut in January 1939. Like The Man Who Sees, both embody masculine respectability and dependability, Peg's Man Pal, in high, round collar and necktie, resembling readers' older, wiser uncle, and The Looker On, with his three-piece suit, slicked-back greying hair and pipe, invoking the same trustworthiness as The Man Who Sees.

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Fig. 14. The Looker On (left) and Peg's Man Pal (right) physically resemble The Man Who Sees (The Looker On, "The Superior Sex," *MW* 24 Jun 1939, 20; Peg's Man Pal, "On Her Wedding Eve," *PP* 24 Jun 1939, 23).

Portrayed in wash and ink, he is a dead ringer for his *Woman's Weekly* counterpart, and is in all likelihood an imitation of the latter; invoking insight, even his pseudonym is nearly identical (Fig. 14).⁴⁸ Since *Woman's Weekly* was an almost exclusively female space until 1936 and *My Weekly* until 1939, it seems reasonable to associate the appearance of regular masculine columnists in these magazines with the prospect of conflict. Whilst, in line with their titles'

⁴⁸ Such blatant 'plagiarism' testifies both to the popularity of The Man Who Sees and to the unscrupulousness of *My Weekly's* editors.

other discourses, they do not confront the prospect of war explicitly – The Looker On’s professed certainty that “Europe [will] come to its senses” is anomalous, permitted presumably because of its brevity and optimism – their paternal demeanour is perhaps comforting at a time of heightened anxiety, and contributes to a reassuring sense that ‘everything will turn out fine’ eventually.⁴⁹ That The Man Who Sees, Peg’s Man Pal, and The Looker On are perceived capable of providing moral guidance is a further sign that notions of masculinity have recovered from the damage they sustained during the First World War. To this extent they reinforce the message transmitted by the healthy heroes of *Woman’s Weekly* romances; older than the latter, however, they embody a somewhat different version of reassuring masculine authority. Sonya Rose contends that the popular press constructed its wartime ideals of young, fit manhood partly in opposition to notions of “old men” who, ineligible for active duty, “were represented in the media as doing something trivial” such as serving in the ARP or Home Guard.⁵⁰ Devising for themselves the role of advisor, The Man Who Sees, Peg’s Man Pal, and The Looker On prepare to counter this apparent uselessness. Respectable, trustworthy, and authoritative, during 1939 they establish themselves as paternal figures to which their magazines’ female readers can turn for sound counsel and reassurance during the difficult days ahead.

“How To Acquire Culture”

⁴⁹ The Looker On, “The Spring – And You!” *MW* 11 Mar 1939, 21.

⁵⁰ Rose, “Temperate Heroes,” 186.

Within the shelter of *Woman's Weekly's* domestic sanctuary from Britain's preparations for possible war, the magazine's readers remain as anxious as they were during 1928 to achieve promotion into the established middle classes. Their middle-class aspirations surface in "How To Acquire Culture" by The Man Who Sees, a series that, taking advantage of opportunities for engaging with the Arts presented by mass culture, introduces them to aspirational cultural works. Printed in the first issue of *Woman's Weekly* per month between January and September 1939, "How To Acquire Culture" consists of nine "Culture Talks" discussing painting, poetry, music, sculpture, and architecture. Introducing readers belonging to a relatively low-income demographic to the Arts, the series appears at a moment when technologies of mass production were giving mass audiences access to so-called high artworks that had formerly been consumed *in situ* by those with the means to do so:⁵¹ testifying to these innovations, photographs of artworks illustrate each Talk, and The Man Who Sees assumes that readers can listen to concerts on the wireless (Fig. 15).⁵²

⁵¹ As Walter Benjamin observes in 1936, the "technological reproduction [...] enables the original to meet the recipient halfway, whether in the form of a photograph or in that of a gramophone record. The cathedral leaves its site to be received in the studio of an art lover; the choral work performed in an auditorium [...] is enjoyed in a private room" ("The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility," *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media*, ed. Michael Jennings., trans. Edmund Jephcott. [Cambridge, MA and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008 [1936]], 22-23). Light highlights the democratising effect of new reproductive technologies by pointing out that, during the 1920s and 1930s, radio and the cinema "disengaged" cultural forms "from their point of origin and community, offering them to [...] new groups" (Alison Light, *Forever England: Femininity, Literature and Conservatism Between the Wars* (London: Routledge, 1991), 216).

⁵² The Man Who Sees, "How To Listen To Music," *WW* 4 Mar 1939, 409, 435-436. Issues of *Woman's Weekly* surveyed for this chapter contain no advertisements for wireless sets. The London Girl's suggestion that housewives set their alarm clocks to avoid missing their favourite programmes reinforces The Man's assumption that readers have access to the latter, however (The London Girl, "Whispers," *WW* 3 Sept 1938, 421).

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Fig. 15. Photographic reproductions of paintings by Van Gogh in a “How To Acquire Culture” Talk (The Man Who Sees, “The Sunflowers and the Cypresses,” *WW* 1 Jul 1939, 22-23).

The increasing accessibility of Art is a contributor to the interwar democratisation of leisure-class culture, and it seems likely that *Woman's Weekly* readers are anxious to ‘become cultured’ partly in order to become middle class. Art’s social value to the competitive, status-obsessed interwar middle classes materialises in novels by E. F. Benson, whose heroine Lucia uses musical taste to claim superiority to her peers in the aptly-named village of Riseholme, and E. M. Delafield, whose Provincial Lady feels anxious at the prospect of being judged for her taste in art and literature;⁵³ reviewing newly released novels and gramophone records, *Good Housekeeping* caters for its readers’ eagerness to keep abreast of the latest cultural trends.⁵⁴ Presumably, through being taught by The Man Who Sees to appreciate works by Van Gogh and Beethoven, *Woman's Weekly* readers hope to keep up with middle-class standards of aesthetic engagement.

Teaching *Woman's Weekly* readers to appreciate Art, “How To Acquire Culture” belongs to the middlebrow, a culture associated strongly with the lower middle classes during the interwar years. In part, the middlebrow functions as a cultural intermediary, making ‘high’ culture accessible to audiences eager to

⁵³ E.g. E. F. Benson, *Queen Lucia* (London: Heinemann, 1970 [1920]); E. M. Delafield, *Diary of a Provincial Lady*, in *The Diary of a Provincial Lady* by E. M. Delafield (London: Virago Press Ltd, 1993 [1930]).

⁵⁴ E.g. Beatrice Kean Seymour, “Reading for the Longer Evenings,” *GH* Oct 1938, 28-29, 132; Hugh Liversidge, “Records to Hear,” *GH* Nov 1938, 188.

establish their status using taste; its appearance as a concept during the late 1920s is linked by Humble to the rise of the “more affluent, newly leisured [suburban middle class]” to which *Woman’s Weekly* readers belong, or aspire to belong.⁵⁵ Sociologist Thorstein Veblen argues that standards of taste are set by members of the leisure classes, who consume cultural works that display their pecuniary wealth and leisure;⁵⁶ middlebrow works offer non-leisure-class audiences material and intellectual resources that aim to help them replicate these standards in their own consumption of culture.⁵⁷ Critics who have examined middlebrow cultural pedagogy as a specific function of interwar periodicals include Sheila Webb, who explores how US publication *Life* “strove to educate the reader in modern standards of taste” during the late 1930s;⁵⁸ Trysh Travis numbers *American Reader’s Digest* among the “middlebrow institutions [offering] to mediate literary culture for modern audiences in need of guidance” during the 1920s.⁵⁹ Louise Kane holds “cheap [mass-produced] periodicals” partially responsible for the development of the middlebrow in Britain, arguing that, along with Forster’s 1870 Education Act and the establishment of board schools and public libraries, they helped to transform the country’s “reading public” from the small, educated elite targeted by most nineteenth-century authors to a broad

⁵⁵ Humble, *Middlebrow*, 10.

⁵⁶ Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (Mineola: Dover Publications Inc., 2007 [1899]), 52.

⁵⁷ Daniel Tracy, “Investing in ‘Modernism’: Smart Magazines, Parody, and Middlebrow Professional Judgement,” *The Journal of Modern Periodical Studies* Volume 1, Number 1 (2010): 40.

⁵⁸ Sheila Webb, “Art Commentary for the Middlebrow: Promoting Modernism & Modern Art through Popular Culture – How *Life* Magazine Brought ‘The New’ into Middle-Class Homes,” *American Journalism* Volume 27, Number 3 (2013): 116.

⁵⁹ Trysh Travis, “Print and the Creation of Middlebrow Culture,” in *Perspectives on American Book History*, ed. Scott E. Caspar et al. (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press), 340.

demographic that included factory workers, domestic servants, and clerks.⁶⁰

Catering for the aspirations of the newly literate classes, the middlebrow, Kane contends, is “a pedagogical form of literature [...] that appeals to a wide, predominantly lower-middle- and working-class readership, who [...] desire to engage in easily comprehensible but cultured reading”.⁶¹ Printed in a cheap 3½d title concerned with activating its readers’ upward class mobility, “How To Acquire Culture” appeals to this very demographic.

Cultural intermediary “How To Acquire Culture” deviates from other forms of the interwar middlebrow however, firstly, in its implied definition of what constitutes the ‘high’ art towards which its readers aspire. Eager to be deemed *au fait* with Woolf’s *Orlando* and to discuss literature with the “distinguished” author of Modernist-sounding novel *Symphony in Three Sexes*, Delafield’s Provincial Lady has distinctly highbrow cultural pretensions – it is difficult, however, to fit the works on The Man Who Sees’ cultural syllabus into the same category.⁶² Post-impressionist paintings by Van Gogh may have seemed *outré* to turn-of-the-twentieth-century audiences, but by the late 1930s they have become relatively mainstream. A painting by Millet, a symphony by Beethoven, an Ancient Roman sculpture, and poetry by Herbert Trench and Alice Meynell, whilst they are presented by The Man as elevated and elevating artworks, do not classify as highbrow in the same way as works by, for instance, Virginia Woolf, Jacob Epstein, and Igor Stravinsky. Perhaps the point here is not that “How To Acquire Culture” complicates what is meant by high art within

⁶⁰ Louise Kane, “‘Chippy Bits Periodicals’ and the Middlebrow: Holbrook Jackson, *T. P.’s Weekly* (1902-1916) and *To-day* (1917-1923),” *The Journal of Modern Periodical Studies* Volume 6, Number 1 (2015): 26.

⁶¹ Kane, “Chippy,” 25.

⁶² Delafield, *Diary*, 5, 9.

middlebrow culture, but that, inasmuch as they are made accessible by the middlebrow, artworks should be designated high not by qualities intrinsic to themselves, but by their relation to the individual who aspires to consume them. Lise Jaillant writes that middlebrow, “in its original [i.e. mid-interwar] sense, described someone with high intellectual or aesthetic aspirations, but who lacked the cultural capital necessary to understand high art”⁶³ – since, because they are acquired during upbringing and education, amount and type of cultural capital vary between individuals, definitions of what constitutes high art must also vary. What is considered high by the Provincial Lady, herself a writer, differs from what is considered high by a *Woman’s Weekly* reader, who, depending on her age, probably left school at twelve or fourteen. Seeming to acknowledge this, The Man takes a swipe at highbrow poets, whose obscurity, he declares, is indicative of their lack of inspiration:

It’s true that poets are sometimes difficult and obscure; but those are moments when their inspiration fails them. [...] The thing about good poetry is its simplicity, not its difficulty; its clearness, not its obscurity.⁶⁴

His implied dismissal of experimental ‘Modernist’ artworks is presumably strategic, a means of reassuring less-well-educated women that they can engage meaningfully with poetry, and that they need not feel that they have to enjoy and understand (for instance) T. S. Eliot in order to achieve cultural betterment. Within the context of other middlebrow works, “How To Acquire Culture” suggests that artworks are designated high, in part, by their consumers’ aspirations. These distinguish *Woman’s Weekly*’s culturally aspirant readers from

⁶³ Lise Jaillant, *Modernism, Middlebrow and the Literary Canon: The Modern Library Series, 1917-1955* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 5.

⁶⁴ The Man Who Sees, “What Is Poetry?” *WW* 4 Feb 1939, 185.

better-off, better-educated housewives like the Provincial Lady, and place them in different strata of the interwar middle classes. This distinction recalls Bourdieu's suggestion that cultural engagement is determined by social background.

The Man Who Sees' pedagogical approach also differentiates "How To Acquire Culture" from other forms of the interwar middlebrow, and its readers from other middlebrow readers. Humble suggests that feminine middlebrow novels appeal to lower-middle-class readers partly because, by depicting upper-middle-class life, they transmit knowledge of upper-middle-class conduct and values. This delivery of information is, however, covert: novels address readers as though they already know what they are being taught, flattering them with the assumption that they already belong to the upper middle classes whilst equipping them with the knowledge they require to activate their self-elevation.⁶⁵

Conveying upper-middle-class culture without appearing to do so, these middlebrow novels acknowledge a readership obsessed with status, anxious to appear upper middle class yet conscious that to ask for guidance would be to admit that they do not belong to upper-middle-class circles.⁶⁶ Fiction reviews in *Good Housekeeping* offer a similarly covert education: recommending novels that "deserve" readers' "attention" alongside 'correct' opinions of the works, and phrases with which to articulate them,⁶⁷ they address a readership whose tastes seem well-developed but who in fact require telling what to read, what to make

⁶⁵ Humble, *Middlebrow*, 88-89.

⁶⁶ Alan S. C. Ross, "U and non-U – An Essay in Sociological Linguistics," in *Noblesse Oblige: An Enquiry into the Identifiable Characteristics of the English Aristocracy*, ed. Alan S. C. Ross and Nancy Mitford (London: Hamish Hamilton Ltd, 1973), 17.

⁶⁷ E.g. "maturity, solidity, sureness of approach and felicity of phrasing"

of it, and how to discuss it with their friends.⁶⁸ Like Humble's middlebrow readers, readers of *Good Housekeeping* seem anxious to disguise a lack of cultural knowledge that could potentially demote them. Unlike Humble's feminine middlebrow novels and *Good Housekeeping* however, "How To Acquire Culture" assumes a readership of novices. As the phrase suggests, knowledge of "Culture" is something *Woman's Weekly* readers currently lack, and The Man begins at the very beginning, exploring in his series' introductory Talk what, he believes, 'being cultured' actually means;⁶⁹ his teacherly mode of address, which includes questioning readers' fictional counterparts and praising them for answering correctly, makes explicit the learning process.⁷⁰ By thus highlighting *Woman's Weekly* readers' present lack of knowledge, The Man Who Sees places "How To Acquire Culture" in a different category of the middlebrow to that occupied by feminine middlebrow novels surveyed by Humble, and *Good Housekeeping* book reviews. His openly pedagogical approach echoes that taken by *Woman's Weekly's* etiquette columns during 1928, which, I argued in Chapter Two, classified their readers as openly not yet middle class; in delivering their cultural education covertly, Humble's feminine middlebrow novels and *Good Housekeeping* book reviews address readers who consider themselves upper middle class, or at least middle middle class, already. In terms of their cultural knowledge, *Woman's Weekly* retains a lower-middle-class sense of its readers during 1939.

⁶⁸ Beatrice Kean Seymour, "Books for the Discriminating," *GH* Dec 1938, 164.

⁶⁹ The Man Who Sees, "The Garden of the Mind," *WW* 31 Dec 1938, 1354-1355.

⁷⁰ The Man Who Sees, "The Test of Good Writing," *WW* 6 May 1939, 910-911, 944.

Whilst The Man Who Sees' approach to delivering *Woman's Weekly* readers' cultural education designates them not yet middle class, that they are aspiring to become cultured at all ranks them above readers of working-class *My Weekly* and *Peg's Paper*, neither of which attempts to engage its readership with 'high' art between September 1938 and September 1939. This claim to cultural superiority is not straightforward however, for it is undermined by the popular romance fiction that remains a staple of all three magazines, and which, according to standards set by contemporary critic Q. D. Leavis, designates all three readerships as lower class. Leavis associates reading with class status in her 1932 anthropological survey *Fiction and the Reading Public*, which classifies individuals by their taste in reading material: members of the "poorer reading public" read a "poorer class of reading matter".⁷¹ This, according to Leavis, includes fiction by popular romance novelists Ruby M. Ayres and Ethel M. Dell;⁷² both publish in *Woman's Weekly* during 1938 and 1939,⁷³ and Ayres also publishes in *My Weekly*.⁷⁴ Other authors whose work is printed in both magazines include Phyllis Denham and Jane England,⁷⁵ whilst Norah Smaridge⁷⁶ and Coralie Stanton⁷⁷ are among those who publish stories in both *Woman's Weekly* and *Peg's Paper*. By Leavis' estimation therefore, it seems that *Woman's*

⁷¹ Queenie D. Leavis, *Fiction and the Reading Public* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1932), 14.

⁷² Leavis, *Fiction*, 4-5.

⁷³ Ruby M. Ayres, "Dear David," WW 3 Dec 1938-18 Feb 1939; Ethel M. Dell, "Sown Among Thorns," WW 25 Mar-26 Aug 1939.

⁷⁴ Ruby M. Ayres, "Big Ben," MW 4 Oct 1938-3 Dec 1938.

⁷⁵ Phyllis Denham, "The Lights Were Switched On," WW 4 Feb 1939, 177-180, 182, 204, 207-208, 211; PD, "All She Ever Wanted," MW 30 Sept 1939, 11-13. Jane England, "Goose Girl," WW 2 Sept 1939, 451-457, 479-480, 483-484, 486 and 9 Sept 1939, 523-531, 543; JE, "No Exit," MW 22 Apr 1939, 15-19.

⁷⁶ Norah Smaridge, "Humble Pie," WW 28 Feb 1948, 227-230, 247; NS, "The Wrong Sort of Man," PP 7 Jan 1939, 14-18.

⁷⁷ Coralie Stanton and Heath Hosken, "The Thief of Hearts," WW 21 Jul 1928-13 Oct 1928; CS, "You Belong To Me," PP 9 Sept 1939, 36-43, 46-47.

Weekly publishes a “poorer class of reading matter” for a “poorer class of reader” and that the magazine shares this ‘poor’ status with two working-class titles. According to Leavis’ system of classification, therefore, *Woman’s Weekly* readers can distinguish themselves from readers of *Peg’s Paper* and *My Weekly* not by their current reading status, which they share, but by the status towards which they aspire. As I argued in relation to holiday features in – or absent from – the three magazines during 1928, level of aspiration is one way of differentiating between the readerships of lower-middle-class and working-class magazines that target, their cover prices suggest, women from similar economic demographics. Introducing the Arts, “How To Acquire Culture” suggests that *Woman’s Weekly* readers regard, or aspire to regard, themselves as middle class; the absence of similar features from *Peg’s Paper* and *My Weekly* indicates that readers of these publications do not.⁷⁸

The Man Who Sees gestures towards the elevated, elevating status of the artworks he discusses by writing “Culture” with an impressive-looking capital C in the text as well as the headings of each Culture Talk. His definition of being cultured, however, suggests that “How To Acquire Culture” aims to help *Woman’s Weekly* readers to distinguish themselves from, rather than join, the leisure classes whose Culture they appear to be gaining. Being cultured, according to The Man, involves privileging the moral quality over the material quantity of one’s engagements with artworks. A wealthy Londoner, he explains,

⁷⁸ There is no reason why Ruby M. Ayres should not be appreciated alongside Beethoven. Their contiguity in *Woman’s Weekly* supports Louise Kane’s belief that periodicals are spaces in which high and low cultures can, and do, co-exist: that periodical readers can, and do, enjoy both (“Chippy,” 24). Perhaps, rather than complicating *Woman’s Weekly* readers’ social aspirations, Ayres and Dell’s adjacency to “How To Acquire Culture” enables them to enjoy popular romance fiction whilst developing their sense of themselves as middle class.

may consume more Culture than a less well-off provincial – but whereas the former’s cultural engagement is superficial, a meaningless “rag bag” of experiences collected without discrimination or purpose, the latter selects Culture discerningly, as a means of initiating moral self-improvement. “A woman may travel and see [picture galleries] in Paris, and Rome, and Vienna” but

she may assimilate nothing. She may come home with a rag bag mind full of odds and ends, which she can reel off like a catalogue; but she may have built little or nothing of all she has seen into her soul to enrich and beautify it. [...] *Culture doesn’t depend on what is spread before you, but upon what you can digest.*⁷⁹

Thus *The Man Who Sees* shifts ‘being cultured’ from a material signifier of pecuniary wealth and leisure to a more democratic state of mind, as available to “ordinary people” as it is to the “widely-travelled”.⁸⁰ Given the relatively low economic status of *Woman’s Weekly* readers, this shift is presumably strategic; nevertheless, their preference for moral quality over material quantity in their consumption of culture enables them to assert moral superiority to the leisure classes. Recalling the superior moral qualities of lower-class *Woman’s Weekly* romance heroines, discussed in Chapters One and Two, this preference suggests that moral superiority to the materialistic leisure classes remains a distinction of the magazine’s lower-middle-class culture towards the end of the interwar period.

Culture and citizenship

⁷⁹ The Man Who Sees, “The Garden Of The Mind,” WW 31 Dec 1938, 1354.

⁸⁰ The Man Who Sees, “Garden,” 1354.

Consuming “Culture” for moral betterment is one further function of the middlebrow, which, according to Beth Driscoll, is distinguished by strong personal and social moral imperatives.⁸¹ Middlebrow reading, Driscoll argues, involves engaging with texts that set a worthy moral example: “stories of personal growth and moral redemption” that foster in their readers an awareness of, and desire to become involved with, “social issues”.⁸² Her elaboration of this ethical dimension of the middlebrow resonates strongly with the ethos of liberal humanist F. R. Leavis, Q. D.’s husband, whose criticism holds “that there is a particularly close connection between the novel and morality”.⁸³ Leavis elaborates on this connection in *The Great Tradition*, arguing that “major novelists” are “significant in terms of the human awareness they promote”⁸⁴ – a contention that, to quote Sean Matthews and Sebastian Groes, “focus[es] our attention on [...] the interrelations of art and life, of aesthetics and ethics”.⁸⁵ The Man Who Sees’ focus on Culture’s moral qualities aligns him critically with Leavis. His assertions that (for instance) poets’ purpose is to disseminate certain fundamental ‘truths’ amongst readers,⁸⁶ and that for Van Gogh, painting replaced preaching as a means of transmitting a Christian message to his fellow citizens,⁸⁷

⁸¹ Beth Driscoll, *The New Literary Middlebrow: Tastemakers and Reading in the Twenty-First Century* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 40-42.

⁸² Driscoll, *Middlebrow*, 40-41.

⁸³ R. P. Bilan, *The Literary Criticism of F. R. Leavis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 115.

⁸⁴ Frank R. Leavis, *The Great Tradition* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd, 1962), 10.

⁸⁵ Sebastian Groes and Sean Matthews, *Kazuo Ishiguro: Contemporary Critical Perspectives* (London: Bloomsbury, 2010), 2.

⁸⁶ “For the Poet [...] knows. And he tells us what [...] he knows” (The Man Who Sees, “What Is Poetry?” WW 4 Feb 1939, 224).

⁸⁷ The Man Who Sees, “The Sunflowers and the Cypresses,” WW 1 Jul 1939, 12-13.

situate “How To Acquire Culture” in this liberal humanist aspect of the middlebrow.

Driscoll believes that an “ideal of citizenship” is key to the middlebrow’s ethical dimension, writing that “[t]he new literary middlebrow promotes reading as a tool for readers to develop ideas about their membership of larger communities”.⁸⁸ Leavis also connects reading with becoming a better citizen, in *Culture and Environment*: a work directed primarily at schoolteachers, whom he holds responsible for children’s social as well as their academic development. Co-written with teacher Denys Thompson and published in 1933, *Culture and Environment* aims to show how children’s literary education can make them resistant to the negative effects of mass culture, which seems to be destroying ‘traditional’ communities. In their introduction to the work, Leavis and Thompson lament the loss of “organic communities” – whose citizens lived in close accordance with one another, “the natural environment and the rhythm of the year” – to machine-driven mass culture, which is disrupting traditional ways of life.⁸⁹ For Leavis and Thompson, the solution is literary education. By discovering the “cultural and social backgrounds” within which certain texts were produced, children will become aware of the communities that are being lost, and by learning to read critically, they will learn to critique and resist the discourses with which mass culture is surrounding them.⁹⁰ Whilst it is impossible to halt the progress of industrialisation, future communities may be built on organic principles.⁹¹ Citizenship in *Culture and Environment* involves an

⁸⁸ Driscoll, *Middlebrow*, 42.

⁸⁹ Frank R. Leavis and Denys Thompson, *Culture and Environment: The Training of Critical Awareness* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1933), 1-3.

⁹⁰ Leavis and Thompson, *Culture*, 6.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 96-97.

awareness of mass culture's destructive impact on communities and individuals, and the capacity to resist its influence, developed through reading. In thus preserving organic values, citizens will 'rebuild' their communities. To the extent that Leavis and Thompson figure reading as a means of developing children's sense of community, and their desire to improve their communities by personally resisting the discourses that are destroying them, their pedagogical text belongs within the middlebrow's ethical parameters, as defined by Driscoll.

The Man Who Sees exhibits a similar sense of citizenship to that expressed by Leavis and Thompson, expressing concerns about the impact of mass culture on traditional ways of life and presenting 'critical reading' as a means of palliating them. He, too, figures the onset of modernity as the destruction of traditional ways of life by mechanisation. In a non-Culture Talk, he laments that winding country lanes are being replaced by roads wide and straight enough to accommodate speeding motor cars; that regional dialects are being erased by the influence of wireless announcers; his contention that "the crowding out of Small Shops" run by shopkeepers who knew their customers by name and "who gave you the impression that they weren't keeping shop chiefly for the sake of making money [...] but for the sake of doing kindly and friendly things for you" invokes the destruction of "organic communities" bound by close human ties, by mass-market consumerism.⁹² Like the children educated according to *Culture and Environment*, *Woman's Weekly* readers receive a sense of the communities that are disappearing under the onslaught of mechanisation through engaging with the "cultural and social" backgrounds of cultural works. Illustrating The Man's Culture Talks, photographs of thatched cottages and rural

⁹² The Man Who Sees, "Augusta Puzzles Her Brain," WW 14 Jan 1939, 44-45.

villages, from which modern technologies such as motorcars are conspicuously absent, frame Culture as a touchstone connecting readers with pre-industrial communities: Culture, these images suggest, forms a link to traditional communities, their values, and ways of life (Fig. 16). That these idyllic images of mass-technology-free communities are produced and disseminated using technologies of mass reproduction makes The Man Who Sees' critique of mass culture somewhat ironic.

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Fig. 16. An Elizabethan farmhouse illustrates The Man's Talk about poetry ("What Is Poetry?," WW 4 Feb 1939, 185).

More specifically, The Man provokes nostalgia for traditional lifestyles and values in his approach to 'reading' civic architecture, the moral significance of which he highlights by stating that, "the atmosphere of our minds and the shape of our characters are influenced by the places in which we live".⁹³ Invoking close-knit communities centred on "small" manor houses or farms, their simple structure and materials evoking the simple lifestyles and values of their original occupants, Cotswold cottages exert a positive moral influence over those who contemplate them;⁹⁴ built in an area of Britain that is still largely undeveloped, these cottages seem to be antidotes to ribbon development housing, which, in a non-Culture Talk, The Man lists among mass culture's distasteful elements.⁹⁵ Whilst The Man does not elaborate on his dislike for ribbon

⁹³ The Man Who Sees, "Why A House Is Beautiful," WW 3 Jun 1939, 1143.

⁹⁴ The Man Who Sees, "House," 1134-1135.

⁹⁵ The Man Who Sees, "My Favourite Bit Of England," WW 15 Apr 1939, 736.

developments, they seem antithetical to his ‘organic’ sense of community: expanding suburbia in the form of ‘mass produced’ semi-detached houses strung along arterial roads leading into towns and cities, they obscured views of the countryside and separated neighbours living “on opposite sides of the highway” to one another.⁹⁶ The Man accuses “ugly” modern architecture of being a symptom of moral degeneracy, and urges readers to lobby their local councils to make improvements – again, he does not specify the exact nature of this degeneracy, but it seems likely that it is linked to ribbon developments’ breakdown of traditional communities.⁹⁷ Articulated in a magazine targeting suburban housewives, The Man Who Sees’ criticism of suburban culture seems risky. Evidently aware of this, he distances his reader from his assertion that “ugly” suburban architecture reflects ugly morality by respectfully assuring her that, “I don’t mean to say that you, madam, if you happen to live in an ugly house deserve that it should cover you. It may have been the only one you could get”.⁹⁸ Written within suburban culture, “How To Acquire Culture” constitutes an effort to embed ‘organic’ social values within its structures: through their cultural education, *Woman’s Weekly* readers are effecting positive change in their communities, by rebuilding them on pre-industrial principles. Middlebrow, liberal humanist “How To Acquire Culture” raises their social conscience, and provokes a desire to improve their material and moral civic environment.

Moral citizens

⁹⁶ Chris Nichol and Andrew Golland, “Innovation and emerging trends in housing development,” in *Housing Development: Theory, Process and Practice*, ed. Ron Blake and Andrew Golland (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 25.

⁹⁷ The Man Who Sees, “House,” 1143.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 1134.

“How To Acquire Culture” participates in *Woman’s Weekly*’s covert response to the possible outbreak of war, and in doing so, situates itself within a more global middlebrow project of community building through self-cultivation. In a Culture Talk introducing Beethoven, The Man posits music’s promotion of traditional communal interaction as an antidote to the threatened conflict. When Beethoven composed his ninth symphony, he explains, “the outside world [...] was going through an agony. [...] Wars and revolutions were everywhere”.⁹⁹ His observation links this artwork to the national and international social and political cultures in which it was produced; his implication that Europe’s social and political climate during the opening decades of the nineteenth century (Beethoven completed his ninth symphony during 1824, shortly after the end of the Napoleonic Wars and before the Second French Revolution) parallels that of Europe during the late 1930s is perhaps reassuring, suggesting that the continent has ‘been here before and survived’. Europe’s state of unrest seems to surface in the symphony’s score itself, in the “strife [...] anguish [...] restlessness [...] terror [...] uncertainty [...] despair” of its glowering first movement and frantic Scherzo; the solution to this musical and social unrest is revealed in the final movement’s “Ode to Joy” which, scored for choir and quartet of vocal soloists as well as orchestra, realises formally the ‘organic’ human community its lyrics describe. “There is no rest to be found, no solution of the world riddle [...] except in Togetherness, in human kindness, in loving Service and Sympathy with our fellows”.¹⁰⁰ It is perhaps remarkable that, given the source of much European unrest during the 1930s, The Man Who Sees offers *Woman’s Weekly* readers

⁹⁹ The Man Who Sees, “A Great Musician’s Masterpieces,” WW 1 Apr 1939, 630-631, 672.

¹⁰⁰ The Man Who Sees, “Great Musician,” 672

hope in the form of a symphony written by a German composer. There is a parallel between his solution for Europe's broken communities and the British communities fractured by mass culture: just as he charges suburban culture with reversing the negative moral impact of "ugly" ribbon development housing, he makes German culture responsible for reversing National Socialism. Change, he suggests, should come from within, from the establishment of 'pre-industrial' values within communities stressed and fractured by the exigencies of the present.

In suggesting that aesthetic culture can help reverse the effects of National Socialism, The Man Who Sees works "How To Acquire Culture" into a global response to the political situation in Europe. His project of community improvement through self-cultivation is paralleled by American middlebrow publication *Reader's Digest*, which, between September 1938 and September 1939, explores anxieties surrounding the impact of Nazism on American communities. *Reader's Digest* was launched in 1922:¹⁰¹ a middlebrow publication mediating between 'high' culture and aspirational consumers, it publishes condensed versions of features from other periodicals and condensed novels, selected for "busy men and women who welcome an easy-to-read collection of articles to keep them well-informed on the world around them".¹⁰² Its British launch in December 1939 reflects and contributes to the increasing availability of 'Culture' to the non-leisure classes;¹⁰³ in retrospect, it is perhaps no coincidence that the title becomes available to British readers within the same

¹⁰¹ *The Story of Reader's Digest* (London: The *Reader's Digest* Association Ltd, 1981), 4.

¹⁰² *Story*, 11.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 8.

year that “How To Acquire Culture” appears in *Woman’s Weekly*. Targeting male as well as female readers, *Reader’s Digest* addresses a broad range of subjects, including, unlike domestic women’s publication *Woman’s Weekly*, current affairs. The political situation in Europe is clearly a cause for concern throughout the year leading up to the Second World War, and the potentially destructive impact of Nazism on America’s multi-ethnic communities, which consist partly of immigrants from Europe, receives some attention. “Unser Amerika” (“Our America”) articulates concern that Nazi propaganda, although so far apparently ineffective, could propagate support for Hitler amongst German Americans, and divide communities in doing so;¹⁰⁴ “Open Our Doors to German Refugees?” raises concerns about the possible social divisiveness of increased immigration from Germany, as Jewish people in particular seek to escape the Nazi regime by moving to America.¹⁰⁵ In the context of these fears, articles positing democratised, democratising Culture as a force for social cohesion gain a particular temporal and social specificity. “Vermont Symphony” describes how an orchestra in Vermont promotes cultural inclusivity by bringing together amateur and professional musicians, and by performing at a fairground rather than in a concert hall – “far from being merely a matter of enjoyment, good music can be source of new community enthusiasm and fellowship”.¹⁰⁶ Reporting on the progress of the Federal Art Project, a state-sponsored initiative to establish arts centres in provincial cities, “Art for Our Sake” makes a similar point: “more than half of [visitors to provincial art centres] have themselves

¹⁰⁴ S. K. Padova, “Unser Amerika,” condensed from *The Forum*, *RD* Jan 1939, 3-9.

¹⁰⁵ Mr Pro and Mr Con, “Open Our Doors to German Refugees?” *RD* May 1939, 82-88.

¹⁰⁶ Samuel Lubell and Al Pollard, “Vermont Symphony,” condensed from *American Forests*, *RD* Dec 1938, 60.

become active and eager participants in [...] classes in local crafts” its writer declares, highlighting, again, Culture’s ability to foster human networks.¹⁰⁷ Given *Reader’s Digest*’s anxieties about the rise of Nazism, these articles’ middlebrow liberal humanist approach to ‘reading’ interprets Culture as a means of strengthening ‘organic’ human networks at a time when they, and the communities they hold together, are being put under stress by the prospect of another war in Europe.

Finally, in using *Woman’s Weekly* readers’ interactions with Culture to develop their sense of community, The Man Who Sees seems to be preparing them for war service of their own. Within his vision of urban utopia, their desire for personal and social moral improvement transforms itself into a desire to become their communities’ moral guardians, reproducing the ‘organic’ values disseminated by artworks on public display. The work prompting this vision is the Venus Victoriosa, a Classical Roman sculpture of a woman, which is displayed in Capua, Italy, but made accessible to *Woman’s Weekly* readers by photograph. Contextualising the Venus, The Man equates aesthetic democratisation with the democratisation of “Beautiful” civic values by suggesting that sculptures, which the Ancient Romans displayed in their streets rather than in galleries or museums, should shape (‘sculpt’) and reflect the values of a society founded on love of Beauty and love of one’s neighbour.¹⁰⁸ Although not articulated explicitly, his notion of ‘Beauty’ seems to be ideal moral values as they materialise in these statues’ form: the moral message is intrinsic to the artwork, he suggests, recalling Leavis. Transmitted by the Venus, these values

¹⁰⁷ “Art For Our Sake,” condensed from *Time*, RD Nov 1938, 100.

¹⁰⁸ The Man Who Sees, “Now Let Us Talk About Sculpture!” WW 5 Aug 1939, 272.

are similar to those transmitted by the Cotswold cottages representing The Man's notion of organic community.

Surely these are the things which make the figure beautiful: simplicity, proportion, balance [...] they must make anything beautiful which possesses them – you and me, your life and my life [...] that is what the statue says.¹⁰⁹

The Man gestures towards the Venus' role in building a civic utopia by explaining that the "Ideal" bodies of the sculptures displayed in Ancient Roman cities represented their societies' (Platonic) belief in an Ideal Society, whose citizens' physical Beauty would produce and reflect Beautiful personal and civic morality; his focus on female sculptures places the responsibility for producing and reflecting Beautiful civic morality onto women. This vision of society, he implies, should inspire the moral environment of a future utopian Britain.

One day, when we have learned to love one another, [...] artists [...] will build and adorn beautiful streets for us to walk in and beautiful places for us to live in. And when we have learned to obey the laws of simplicity and proportion and balance in our way of living, then, because of the beautiful life that will be within us, we shall grow beautiful bodies and women will walk as goddesses on the earth.¹¹⁰

Through contemplating the Venus Victoriosa, The Man suggests, *Woman's Weekly* readers aspire to become moral guardians of his urban utopia. In thus aspiring to discharge their civic duty by becoming guardians of civic morality, they prepare to perform an important aspect of their war service: as Chapter Four will argue, the magazine exhorts them during the war to preserve 'pre-war'

¹⁰⁹ The Man Who Sees, "Sculpture!" 272-273.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 273.

morality (sexual morality in particular) in order that the structures of ‘ordinary’ life will not be damaged by the social circumstances of war.

Conclusion

To a twenty-first-century reader with hindsight, Britain’s preparations for the Second World War present themselves largely through their explicit absence from *Woman’s Weekly* between September 1938 and September 1939. Implicitly however, the magazine’s escapist discourses work through anxieties raised by the prospect of conflict, reassuring readers that their menfolk are ready to bear arms in defence of their country, and preparing them to perform war service of their own. Specifically, the latter will involve supporting men and guarding social morality. Concerns about the coming war aside, *Woman’s Weekly* remains keen to facilitate its readers’ upward class mobility, offering them the means to ‘acquire Culture’ using technologies of mass reproduction. Since, however, ‘becoming cultured’ constitutes becoming morally superior to the leisure classes, the magazine retains its ambivalence towards leisure-class culture. This ambivalence is reinforced by readers’ presumed appetite for a seemingly ‘poorer class’ of fiction, which, along with their interest in horoscopes and continued lack of interest in current affairs, suggests that, although they are economically better-off than they were during years surveyed, they have yet to gain entry to the established middle classes. Surveying magazines issued between 1940 and 1945, Chapter Four will examine *Woman’s Weekly*’s distinctively lower-middle-class construction of its readers’ war service, in the discharge of which it encourages them to preserve strict boundaries between themselves and working-class women.

Chapter Four: War

(September 1939-September 1945)

The Second World War began on 3 September 1939, when Britain declared war on Germany, and ended on 2 September 1945, when Japan surrendered to America. Lasting almost exactly six years, it was fought on frontlines in Europe, North Africa, Asia, and Russia; it was also fought on the domestic front, where, in Britain, its impact was felt through bombing raids, rationing and shortages, evacuation, military and civilian conscription, and volunteering. In the difficult, often dangerous conditions of this so-called total war,¹ the British women's magazine market seems to have thrived.² Its survival was against challenging odds: staff numbers were short and premises were bombed,³ paper and advertising were scarce, "many titles ceased publication" and some amalgamated,⁴ but reading matter of any kind was difficult to obtain, and women "mopped up" such magazines that were available,⁵ passing them around so that each copy was read multiple times.⁶ Broadly, critics agree that the attraction of women's magazines to their wartime readers was twofold: they gave practical advice for coping with domestic privations and war service, both civilian and military, performed within and outside the home, and they boosted spirits and

¹ John Horne, *State, Society and Mobilization in Europe during the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 3.

² Janice Winship, *Inside Women's Magazines* (London: Pandora, 1987), 28.

³ Marjorie Ferguson, *Forever Feminine: Women's Magazines and the Cult of Femininity* (London and Exeter, NH: Heinemann), 19.

⁴ Cynthia L. White, *Women's Magazines 1693-1968* (London: M. Joseph, 1970) 123.

⁵ Joan Barrell and Brian Braithwaite, *The Business of Women's Magazines* (London: Kogan Page, 1988), 21.

⁶ White, *Magazines*, 123.

morale.⁷ Critical attention does not, however, seem to have focused as strongly on magazines' provision of comfort, consolation, and escapism from the conflict, although Irene Dancyger alludes to this when she observes that wartime "magazine fiction remained curiously impervious to the contemporary scene".⁸ This chapter will begin to make good this omission. Surveying *Woman's Weekly* magazines issued between September 1939 and September 1945, it will explore how the publication helped and boosted its wartime readers, and offered them spaces free from the war into which they could escape, and find solace for, the difficulties, deprivations, and dangers that they and their families were experiencing daily.

Woman's Weekly probably owes its survival of the war, in part, to the British government. Recognising the potential influence of magazines over the vast numbers of women who bought and read them, and their "unique ability" to communicate with their readers about their activities in the private and public spheres,⁹ the war government nurtured close relations with their editors,¹⁰ who, seemingly eager to support the war effort, formed The Group of Editors of Women's Magazines and "volunteered" their publications for national service.¹¹ *Woman's Weekly*, having claimed a circulation of 498,000 in 1938, could be an

⁷ E.g. Deborah Chambers, "Contexts and Developments in Women's Magazines," in *The Routledge Companion to British Media History*, ed. Martin Conboy et al. (London: Routledge, 2015), 288; Irene Dancyger, *A World of Women: An Illustrated History of Women's Magazines* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1978), 151-155; Ferguson, *Forever*, 20; Michael Vaughan-Rees and Jane Waller, *Women in Wartime: The Role of Women's Magazines 1939-1945* (London: Macdonald Optima, 2006), 13; White, *Magazines*, 123.

⁸ Dancyger, *World*, 151.

⁹ Ferguson, *Forever*, 18.

¹⁰ Chambers, "Contexts," 288.

¹¹ Ferguson, *Forever*, 18. I have been unable to discover whether *Woman's Weekly*'s wartime editor belonged to this group.

effective propaganda tool,¹² and was evidently exploited by the government as such.¹³ Wartime issues of the magazine feature recruitment advertisements for the women's armed forces, alongside War Ministry directives seeking to subordinate domestic consumption and productivity to Britain's war aims: under the conditions of total war, the publication abandons its interwar reluctance to engage openly with current affairs, and becomes a mouthpiece for official information. Comparative publication *Good Housekeeping*, which boasts a pre-war circulation of 99,400,¹⁴ also prints recruitment adverts and government directives – not so *My Weekly* or *Peg's Paper* however, which may indicate that neither title was thought to reach a large enough audience, or that their editors opted out of such explicit government collaboration. In these respects, *Woman's Weekly's* publication of official material testifies to both its popularity and its outward patriotism, although, this chapter will suggest, there is one matter in which it offers its readers an alternative to the prevailing, official narrative.

Throughout the war, two related anxieties emerge repeatedly in *Woman's Weekly*: the feared impact of the conflict on femininity, and a desire to maintain continuity with peacetime social conditions. These anxieties reflect broader social concerns. Phil Goodman records fears that women would be masculinised by their war service, which, often performed in typically male occupations and working environments, was thought by worried contemporaries to blur previously well-defined gender distinctions;¹⁵ according to David Clampin, official and social discourses sought, in response, to establish and preserve strict

¹² White, *Magazines*, 123, Appendix IV.

¹³ Chambers, "Contexts," 289.

¹⁴ White, *Magazines*, Appendix V.

¹⁵ Phil Goodman, "'Patriotic Femininity': Women's Morals and Men's Morale during the Second World War," *Gender and History* Volume 10, Number 2 (1998): 279.

gender boundaries, in hopes of preserving stability and continuity for the duration.¹⁶ Encouraging their readers to cultivate feminine appearances, even whilst they urged them to join the forces or manufacture munitions, women's magazines occupy an intersection between continuity and change;¹⁷ *Woman's Weekly* is no exception, publishing, this chapter will suggest, material that both preserves and challenges notions of pre-war femininity. In this respect, the magazine may be exacerbating anxieties it seeks to quell, although once again its heterogeneous form functions as a space in which contradictory attitudes can, and do, co-exist. Besides femininity and continuity, this chapter will explore a third, related, anxiety: social class. Recalling previous discussions of femininity in the paid workplace in interwar issues of the magazine, this chapter will argue that anxieties about the so-called masculinisation of British women during the Second World War may have been strongly influenced by prejudices against working-class female stereotypes, concerns about which surface in *Woman's Weekly* discourses addressing readers' wartime professional and sexual conduct. Maintaining a sense of social continuity by seeking to preserve pre-war femininity, whilst challenging what 'being a woman' means and involves under the conditions of total war, *Woman's Weekly's* wartime readers remain as anxious as they were during the interwar period to distinguish themselves from the working classes.

To survey wartime *Woman's Weekly*, this chapter is divided into five sections. "Materiality" comments on the material condition of magazines produced during wartime; "Housewives to the nation (at work)" and

¹⁶ David Clampin, *Advertising and Propaganda in World War II: Cultural Identity and the Blitz Spirit* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2014), 171-172.

¹⁷ Vaughan-Rees and Waller, *Women*, 80, 84.

“Housewives to the nation (at home)” examine how *Woman’s Weekly* helps its readers perform their war service, outside and inside their homes; “Relationships and sex” explores the magazine’s attitudes towards readers’ wartime relationships and sexual health, with specific focus on agony aunt Mrs Marryat; “Romances of ordinary life” suggests that under wartime conditions, the mundane and extraordinary switch functions; finally, “From war to peace” draws the chapter together and examines, briefly, the magazine’s preparations for readers’ demobilisation. Again, brief, strategic comparisons with *Good Housekeeping*, *My Weekly*, and *Peg’s Paper* help to position *Woman’s Weekly* and its values within Britain’s magazine market. Throughout, I will suggest that, despite having been produced under conditions of total war, much about *Woman’s Weekly* magazines issued between September 1939 and September 1945 remains unchanged from the interwar years.

Materiality

Flipping through the bound volumes that comprise the British Library’s archive of wartime *Woman’s Weekly* magazines, which grow progressively thinner each year, it is palpably obvious that the conditions of total war caused the publication to suffer materially. To a reader handling them over seventy years after they were printed, their pale brown pages are tangibly more brittle than those issued during the final year of peace – with the surprising exception, however, of magazines issued on 16, 23, and 30 October 1943, whose leaves, creamy, smooth-almost-to-the-point-of-glossiness, point to the sudden appearance of a limited cache of pre-war paper. (Intriguingly, this paper is also palpably superior to that on which *Woman’s Weekly* is printed during the years surveyed in

previous chapters.) Magazines' price, length, and area dimensions have also been affected by the war. Paper and newsprint rationing were introduced during 1940, when it also became illegal to start a new magazine;¹⁸ in May of that year, to offset the rising cost of paper, the cover price increases by a penny, to 3d.¹⁹ By mid-1942, issues have been cut to thirty pages in length,²⁰ features have become shorter and visually more cramped, and the amount of advertising copy has been vastly reduced,²¹ presumably another factor contributing to the rise in cover price.

¹⁸ Tom O'Malley, "The Regulation of the Press," in *The Routledge Companion to British Media History*, ed. Martin Conboy et al. (London and New York: Routledge, 2015), 234; David Scott Kastan, *The Oxford Encyclopedia of English Literature: Volume 1* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 298.

¹⁹ "The cost of paper is increased to more than double its pre-war price and now we are faced with a further rise in price and acute paper rationing" (The London Girl, "Whispers," WW 25 May 1940, 993).

²⁰ From 50 pages on 2 Sept 1939

²¹ 55 adverts (2 Sept 1939) to 37 adverts (5 Sept 1942).

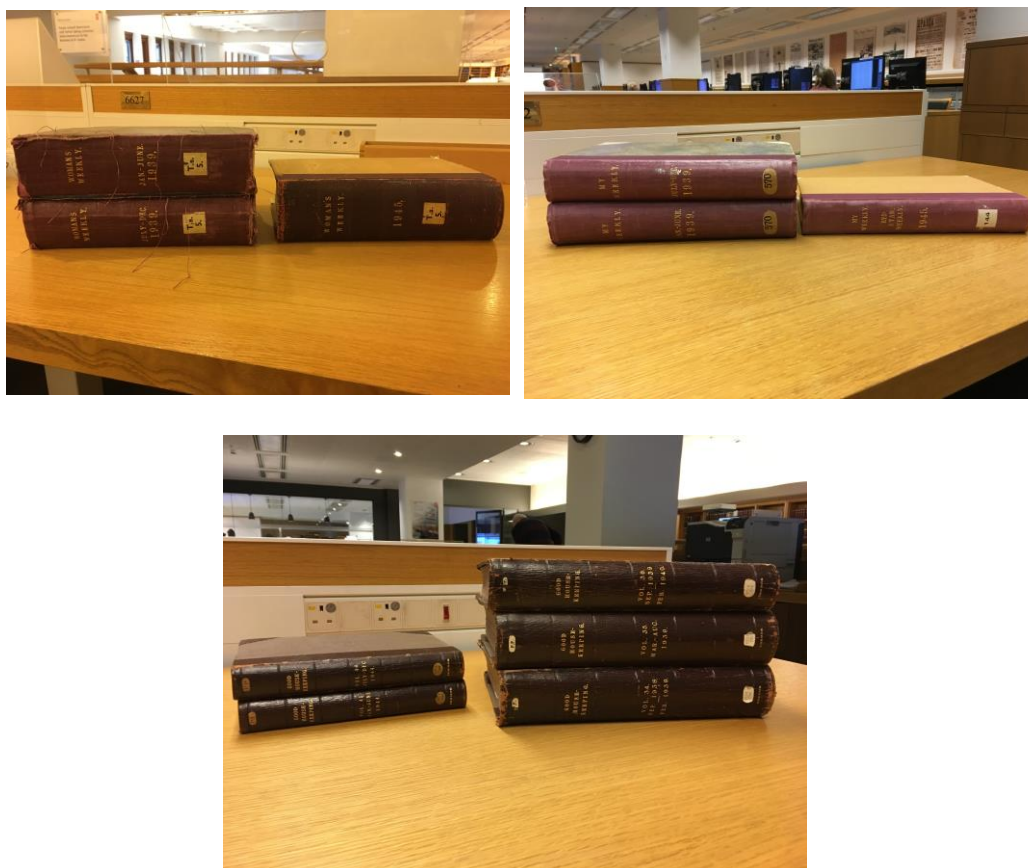


Fig. 17. These photographs illustrate how paper rationing caused issues of *Woman's Weekly*, *My Weekly*, and *Good Housekeeping* to shrink dramatically in length during the Second World War. The piles in each are a year's magazines before and during the war. (Clockwise from top left: bound issues of *Woman's Weekly* [1939 and 1945], *My Weekly* [1939 and 1945] and *Good Housekeeping* [1944 and 1939] from the British Library's archive, photographed in the Newsroom of the British Library at St Pancras).

Indicating that this wartime drop in material standards is probably market-wide, the quality of comparative titles *My Weekly* and *Good Housekeeping* falls as well. The grade of paper used to produce *My Weekly*, not high to begin with, drops, the number of pages per magazine decreases,²² and, from November 1941, the publication switches from weekly to fortnightly issue. Aided, no doubt, by these belt-tightening measures, *My Weekly* succeeds in maintaining its pre-war cover price (2d) for the duration: an indication that its

²² From 36 (2 Sept 1939) to 14 (13 Jan 1945).

readers probably occupy a slightly lower income bracket than readers of *Woman's Weekly*, presumed able to afford the 1d rise. The cost of *Good Housekeeping*, however, fluctuates, increasing from 1s to 1s 6d for the December 1940 issue, decreasing to 1s 3d in January 1941, and then increasing again to 1s 6d in December 1942: its better-off readers' weekly budgeting perhaps need not be quite so exact. The title's paper quality fluctuates too, smooth to coarse, and it also reduces the number of pages per issue; area dimensions are also reduced,²³ which, as well as limiting paper usage further, makes *Good Housekeeping* more portable, a boon for readers working outside their homes or dashing to air raid shelters. Overall, the decreasing material quality of *Woman's Weekly*, *Good Housekeeping*, and *My Weekly* reflects the material deprivations experienced by their producers during a period of making-do with very little. These necessary material changes can, however, be thanked for helping the titles survive the war: indeed, *Good Housekeeping* and *My Weekly*, like *Woman's Weekly*, remain on sale today. Sadly, third comparative title *Peg's Paper* did not survive the conflict. On 10 August 1940, 'Peg' announced that, owing to paper shortages, printing would be suspended for the duration – her promise that it would resume once the war was over was never fulfilled.

Housewives to the nation (at work)

Woman's Weekly's willing participation in Britain's war effort forces it to engage directly with current affairs, previously outside its broadly domestic sphere of interest (Chapters Two and Three). This is one major point of difference between the pre-war and wartime publication: as this chapter will suggest, Britain's war

²³ 21 x 29cm (*GH* Sept 1939) to 16 x 22cm (*GH* Sept 1944)

interests shape numerous aspects of daily life for its wartime readers. To begin with, their working lives are subject to official intervention. Encouraged to join the women's forces or to gear domestic productivity towards helping their country maximise its limited resources, *Woman's Weekly's* wartime readers become housewives to their nation.

Depictions of women performing national service by undertaking paid employment outside their homes appear in *Woman's Weekly* from the start of the war, but become more conspicuous from April 1941, a surge in visibility coinciding almost exactly with government demands that women increase their public contribution to Britain's war effort. During 1939 and 1940, war service was voluntary; following labour shortages however, the March 1941 Registration for Employment Order directed young, childless, single women without domestic responsibilities into war work. Women's conscription, into civilian posts as well as the women's forces, was introduced the following December, and from April 1943 housewives were directed into part-time work.²⁴ Volunteers, conscripts, and part-time workers are all acknowledged by wartime *Woman's Weekly*, in recruitment adverts and features, commercial adverts, and craft pages. These depictions of women performing national service, which classify the magazine's readership by social status and – possibly – by age, although this is less certain, present a complex model of wartime femininity, simultaneously reinforcing and refuting the so-called masculinisation of women by national service. Whilst stressing the vital importance of women's contribution to Britain's war effort, *Woman's Weekly's* recruitment discourses express broader desires for normality

²⁴ Harold L. Smith, "The Effect of the War on the Status of Women," in *War and Social Change: British Society in the Second World War*, ed. Harold L. Smith (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), 214, 216.

by offering the magazine's domestic interior as an ideological sanctuary from the social conditions of war.

Wartime *Woman's Weekly's* recruitment discourses apparently indicate that the age of its target readers has risen considerably during the interwar years. During the First World War, the magazine published frequent articles detailing the duties and conduct expected of women working in war-related occupations, signalling that it targeted relatively young active participants²⁵ – during the Second World War however, although recruitment adverts for the women's services target women of conscription age, and although Mrs Marryat responds to readers' queries about paid war work, an absence of equivalent features reviewing wartime jobs or giving explicit workplace conduct guidance suggests that the majority of the magazine's readers are assumed to be significantly older than they were during the previous conflict. This comparison may be deceptive however, for it could equally suggest that the publication's approach to supporting its readers during wartime has altered. The lack of material relating to jobs outside the home may reflect, rather than a significantly older readership, *Woman's Weekly's* desire to continue its mainly domestic focus; since the magazine targets housewives, and since women with young children and domestic responsibilities were exempt from conscription, the absence of features addressing non-domestic work may reflect readers' socio-economic status more clearly than their ages. Perhaps surprisingly for a domestic magazine with a target readership including mothers, the title does not discuss evacuation, in pre-war as well as in wartime issues: but whilst this, too, could indicate a more mature target readership, it could also reflect a decision to avoid engaging with a

²⁵ See Chapter One fn. 1, page 45.

potentially distressing subject. As during previous years therefore, it is extremely difficult to pin down the age of the *Woman's Weekly's* target readers during the Second World War. They seem to be older than they were two decades previously – but this is difficult to tell for certain.

As during the interwar period, *Woman's Weekly's* wartime employment discourses classify the magazine's readership as lower middle class in relation to readers of comparative magazines *Good Housekeeping*, *Peg's Paper*, and *My Weekly*. Again, economic status classifies *Woman's Weekly* readers below readers of middle-middle-class *Good Housekeeping*. Both magazines encourage readers to mobilise their culinary skills in the service of their country; but whereas *Woman's Weekly* readers who aspire to be cooks receive free training, readers of *Good Housekeeping* attend a costly catering course at the Good Housekeeping Institute in London, following which, providing that they pass the necessary theoretical and practical examinations, they will receive the prestigious-sounding *Good Housekeeping* Certificate in Canteen Cookery.²⁶ Again, level of education also differentiates between readers of the two publications: whereas *Woman's Weekly* readers are encouraged to apply for clerical posts in the women's services, readers of *Good Housekeeping* are encouraged to consult *Woman's Employment: The Journal for Educated Workers*, a publication promising, its title suggests, to direct readers with High School Certificates or perhaps degrees into occupations compatible with their educational standing.²⁷ By *Good Housekeeping's* standards therefore, *Woman's*

²⁶ "Domestic Service – New Style!" WW 11 Mar 1944, 287, 307; P. L. Garbutt, "Britain's civil army, too, marches on its stomach!" GH Jan 1942, 27-29, 79-80.

²⁷ Advert, "*Women's Employment: The Journal for Educated Workers*," GH Aug 1942, 82.

Weekly's wartime readers remain not yet middle class in their choice of war occupation. Comparisons with *Peg's Paper* and *My Weekly* indicate, however, that they also remain not working class. Wartime issues of *Woman's Weekly* do not print factory recruitment propaganda, which suggests that its readers do not desire to be directed into this dirty, manual occupation: apparently their professional aspirations appear unchanged since 1918-19, when the "Chats on Careers" employment advice column omitted factory work (Chapter One). By contrast, the penultimate issue of working-class title *Peg's Paper* contains an advert for munitions workers.²⁸ *Woman's Weekly* readers also appear anxious to differentiate themselves from domestic servants, a concern not apparently shared by readers of *My Weekly*. Whilst the class sensitivities of the former are acknowledged by an article appealing for domestic workers, which, asking them to help ease the pressure on essential health workers by doing their housework, assures them that, if seconded to the homes of busy doctors or new mothers, they will not classify as servants,²⁹ the latter prints similar appeals without displaying the same scruples.³⁰ Since these are virtually the only wartime employment adverts to appear in *My Weekly*, perhaps the magazine consciously targets maids, or former maids. As previously, however, distinctions demarcating *Woman's Weekly* readers from working-class women are not always clear in the magazine's employment discourses: letters to Mrs Marryat from munitions workers indicate that some of the magazine's wartime readers are performing factory work. Once again, they might be distinguished from readers of working-

²⁸ Advert, "Munition Work," *PP* 3 Aug 1940, 28.

²⁹ "you will work for the good of the community, not to give an easier time to some wealthier woman" ("Domestic Service – New Style!" *WW* 11 Mar 1944, 307).

³⁰ E.g. advert, "This Domestic Work is a priority job," *MW* 26 Feb 1944, 11 and *MW* 25 Mar 1944, 10.

class titles *Peg's Paper* and *My Weekly* by their aspirations, rather than by their actual status. Again, they do not appear to occupy a more elevated status than they did during the previous year surveyed.

Wartime *Woman's Weekly* directs readers of conscription age into the women's forces, where the service they join, and their duties, will be determined partly by class. Official rhetoric emphasised social levelling in the women's forces during the Second World War, but in practice this was not necessarily the case: contrary to the impression given by popular images showing women from all classes mucking in together, the Women's Royal Naval Service, the Women's Auxiliary Air Force, and the Auxiliary Territorial Service were strongly hierarchical, both between one another and within their own ranks.³¹ Operating on a voluntary basis and requiring applicants to provide letters of reference, the WRNS (or 'Wrens') was the smallest and most exclusive of the women's services; next in popularity came the WAAF, with the ATS, owing to its unattractive uniforms and poorly educated, generally working-class recruits, considered the 'lowest' of the three.³² In the light of this social streaming, recruitment adverts for the women's forces offer a further indication of *Woman's Weekly* readers' assumed status and aspirations during the Second World War. A total absence of WRNS adverts suggests that they are not believed to belong to the Wrens' exclusive recruitment demographic; instead, they are directed into the WAAF and the ATS, where, working mainly in clerical posts, they will retain the 'white-collar' status that distinguished them professionally from the working classes during the interwar years. "Do your own job in the RAF" promises one

³¹ Geoffrey G. Field, *Blood, Sweat, and Toil: Remaking the British Working Class, 1949-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 164.

³² Field, *Blood*, 164.

WAAF advert printed shortly after conscription was introduced;³³ another declares that a clerk can become a radio operator, a typist can become a Morse slip reader, and a shop assistant can become an equipment assistant.³⁴ Likewise, an ATS advert appeals to shorthand typists and shop girls,³⁵ although calls on the same advertisements for cooks and “domestic worker[s]” (probably a euphemism for servants) suggest, again, that *Woman’s Weekly* positioned its wartime readership on the cusp of the lower middle and working classes.³⁶ Appealing to *Woman’s Weekly* readers of conscription age, or perhaps readers’ daughters and granddaughters, these adverts make joining the women’s services attractive on two levels. By inviting readers to transfer their peacetime jobs to forces posts, they demonstrate that the shift from civilian to military life will be easy; in making this direct transfer, they imply, recruits will maintain existing civilian professional class distinctions within new military contexts. Whilst working-class readers may perhaps have found the prospect of remaining ‘in their place’ disheartening, white-collar workers may have found the implicit promise that they will maintain their distance from the servant classes whilst serving their country reassuring.

Encouraging *Woman’s Weekly* readers to perform their wartime national service in the women’s branches of the armed forces, recruitment advertisements present them with potentially confusing gender narratives. On the one hand, it appears that military service will masculinise female recruits, in their appearance and duties, and also in their social ambitions.

³³ Advert, “WAAF,” WW 19 Apr 1941, 554.

³⁴ Advert, “WAAF,” WW 22 Feb 1941, 269.

³⁵ Advert, “ATS,” WW 8 Nov 1941, 601.

³⁶ Advert, “ATS,” WW 22 Feb 1941, 269; advert, “ATS,” WW 8 Nov 1941, 601.

IMAGE DELETED

Fig. 18. ATS advert showing boyish-looking recruit (Advert, “ATS,” WW 8 Nov 1941, 601).

“We’ve got to take over more of the men’s work now” declares an ATS recruit, boyish-looking with her hair pinned beneath her uniform cap (Fig. 18);³⁷ “[c]ome and work with him for victory” demands the ATS beneath a photograph of a male soldier.³⁸ One ATS advert displays a booklet whose title, *a woman’s place now*, flipping a cliché to suggest that, at the moment, women’s natural habitat is the Army, not the home:³⁹ operating ack-ack (anti-aircraft) batteries, ATS recruits will engage directly in the battle for Britain’s skies, handling weapons rather than domestic appliances.⁴⁰ Furthermore, through being transferred from the domestic sphere into the military, female recruits are inducted by adverts into a ‘masculine’ meritocracy within which hard work is rewarded with professional and class promotion, conflated in officer status. “I wonder if they’d [...] give me extra training to get on quickly? And would there be any hope of getting a commission fairly soon?” muses a potential ATS recruit;⁴¹ a WAAF advert promises that “the opportunity of obtaining promotion to commissioned rank will be available to women of personality and character”.⁴² Whilst narratives of meritocratic promotion are not new to wartime *Woman’s Weekly*, these adverts’

³⁷ Advert, “ATS,” WW 8 Nov 1941, 601.

³⁸ Advert, “ATS,” WW 20 Dec 1941, 789.

³⁹ Advert, “ATS,” WW 27 Dec 1941, 818.

⁴⁰ Advert, “ATS,” WW 20 Dec 1941, 789.

⁴¹ Advert, “ATS,” WW 8 Nov 1941, 601.

⁴² Advert, “WAAF,” WW 22 Nov 1941, bc.

suggestion that women can ‘earn their way up’ is. As my analyses of the magazines’ fictional romances have suggested, during the interwar years the recipients of concurrent social and professional elevation are male: up-and-coming young men from lower-middle-class backgrounds, who achieve promotion at work before proposing to heroines, themselves ‘Cinderellas’ who achieve their own class aspirations by marrying up (Chapters One and Two). Although some of these romances suggest that professional promotion *can* improve women’s social prospects, by bringing them into contact with more professionally senior bachelors, this implication is lacking from these wartime adverts, which, depicting female recruits alone, do not allude even visually to the prospect of marriage. Making the women’s forces desirable by associating ‘joining up’ with class elevation through professional promotion, these recruitment adverts cast their readers as heroes rather than heroines, masculinising a key distinction of their interwar lower-middle-class femininity; the WAAF’s upwardly mobile “women of personality and character” even embody distinctive characteristics of *Woman’s Weekly*’s self-made heroes (Chapter Two). Eager to achieve concurrent professional and social promotion, these ATS and WAAF recruits seem to confirm the wartime masculinisation of British servicewomen by their uniforms and duties.

These implications that *Woman’s Weekly* readers will be masculinised by serving in the armed forces are countered, however, by suggestions in other recruitment adverts that servicewomen will maintain their peacetime professional subordination to men, and transfer their domestic skills to the military.

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Fig. 19. ATS advert encouraging women to support fighting men (Advert, “ATS,” WW 16 Aug 1941, 217).

“Women! [...] help our men to crush this evil Nazi menace quickly!”⁴³ – “[y]ou must come into the Army and help the men”⁴⁴ – above a dramatic image of a soldier marching forward against a background of searchlights, fire, ruined buildings, and falling men, “[n]o woman will ever have peace in her heart until she helps this man!” (Fig. 19).⁴⁵ Fighting, these adverts suggest, is men’s work, and women’s is to support them. Recruiting *Woman’s Weekly* readers as servicemen’s helpmeets, these adverts transfer into wartime professional contexts the dominant male-subordinate female relations between heroes and heroines of the magazine’s workplace romances, themselves based on lower-middle-class marital relations, in which a wife helps her husband to ‘get on’ professionally and socially. Although, in this wartime context, getting on means defeating fascism rather than moving up in the firm, these adverts reproduce the structure of peacetime gender relations in interwar *Woman’s Weekly*, and in doing so, countermand other recruitment adverts’ masculinisation of servicewomen. More explicitly, recruitment adverts for the Navy, Army, and Air Force Institutes invite readers to serve their nation by producing the equivalent of homes for servicemen. Established in 1921, the NAAFI supports the forces by providing “rest, refreshment and [...] reminders of life back home” to service personnel on duty;⁴⁶ NAAFI recruitment adverts in *Woman’s Weekly* relate this form of

⁴³ Advert, “ATS,” WW 30 Aug 1941, bc.

⁴⁴ Advert, “ATS,” WW 22 Nov 1941, 661.

⁴⁵ Advert, “ATS,” WW 16 Aug 1941, 217.

⁴⁶ Roy Bainton, *The Long Patrol: The British in Germany since 1945* (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing [Edinburgh] Ltd, 2003), 9.

service directly to lower-middle-class housewifery. “Naafi canteens provide [...] the hundred and one small extra comforts that take the edge off the hardships of service life”⁴⁷ – more directly, “[h]ousekeeping for the Forces is a tremendous task”.⁴⁸

IMAGE DELETED

Fig. 20. Domestic image on a NAAFI advert (Advert, “NAAFI,” WW 1 Apr 1944, bc).

The tremendous desirability of this task is established by an image on a separate advert, of a soldier and a young woman leaning towards one another over a counter beside a cup of tea and a plate of biscuits:⁴⁹ holding what look like playing cards or photographs, but which are probably ration cards, the soldier and NAAFI worker resemble a couple at home, and transfer cosy domestic life into a military context (Fig. 20). The single chevron on the soldier’s sleeve indicates that he is a private rather than an officer; nevertheless, the image, whilst it does not link women’s military service to marital promotion, implies that women remain homemakers on active service. Countering the implications for gender made by the meritocratic WAAF adverts, the image deploys romance to make national service in the NAAFI desirable. Britain desires that *Woman’s Weekly* readers deploy their domestic skills in support of servicemen, and *Woman’s Weekly* readers (are assumed to) desire loving husbands: the *Woman’s Weekly* ‘war heroine’ who serves her nation as a homemaker will, it implies,

⁴⁷ Advert, “NAAFI,” WW 1 Apr 1944, bc.

⁴⁸ Advert, “NAAFI,” WW 18 Sept 1943, ii.

⁴⁹ Advert, “NAAFI,” WW 1 Apr 1944, bc.

receive a romance heroine's reward. For readers concerned that servicewomen's femininity will be compromised by military service, these recruitment adverts offer reassurance that it will not.

Woman's Weekly's deflection of the so-called masculinisation of women working in typically male occupations and environments represents another point of continuity between the pre-war and wartime magazine. The issue may have been foregrounded in society more generally by women's needed public contribution to the war effort – but it is not new to *Woman's Weekly*. As Chapters One and Two have established, its readers are presumed to be used to the idea of working in paid employment alongside men, and to their professional femininity being a matter of concern, explicitly, in conduct features, or implicitly, in romance fiction. Key to readers' lower-middle-class status, these interwar discourses have suggested, are the assumptions that, if single, they are working to support themselves in white-collar occupations, or if married, they worked in paid employment before becoming dependent on their husbands; distinguishing themselves from working-class women in manual occupations is, I have suggested, paramount in their choice of occupation. On the basis of these assumptions, *Woman's Weekly* has debated forms, functions, and the status of workplace womanhood throughout the interwar period: from November 1918, the magazine has targeted readers who are working to support themselves, and has sought to preserve their femininity in environments that bring them into direct contact with men. I suggest, therefore, that women's wartime occupations do not, in *Woman's Weekly*, represent a new, specifically war-related threat to femininity. Rather, they reproduce and foreground existing anxieties, chief among which is maintaining a professional distance from the working classes. In

the magazine's attitude towards readers in paid employment, little seems to have been changed by war.

Housewives to the nation (at home)

Further challenge to and defence of femininity is issued by *Woman's Weekly's* domestic discourses, which, using military rhetoric to demand that readers deploy their domestic resources and resourcefulness in their country's wartime interests, present the brand of lower-middle-class housewifery sold by wartime issues of the magazine as a form of national service; remaining cheerful, these discourses seek to boost readers' morale. Whereas recruitment adverts target readers of call-up age, the magazine's domestic features encourage all readers to do their bit; converted from domestic into national production, knitting ensures that perhaps older readers in particular contribute materially to the war effort, whilst the magazine's dressmaking discourses deploy their existing skills in the service of Make-do and Mend.

Woman's Weekly's domestic discourses make clear the enormous demands made by total war on the housewives assumed to comprise the bulk of its mass readership. High on their list of priorities is food. Introduced in 1940, food rationing began with sugar, butter, ham, and bacon, and was subsequently extended to meat, cheese, margarine, cooking fats, preserves, tea, milk, and eggs; "hard-to-find" foods such as tinned fruit or sweets were put on a points scheme, subject to availability.⁵⁰ Directives from the Ministry of Food keep *Woman's Weekly* readers abreast of developments on the kitchen front: counselling them

⁵⁰ Jennifer Purcell, *The Domestic Soldier: War, Women and the Home Front* (London: Constable, 2010), 90.

against wasting ingredients or fuel, recommending dishes for special occasions, suggesting ways of bulking out or replacing ingredients in short supply, promoting market gardening and bottling, and attempting to jolly things up by presenting unpopular foodstuffs as blessings rather than hardships,⁵¹ these directives remind readers of their duty, and boost their morale. Commercial food adverts echo directives' messages,⁵² working their products into readers' patriotic conscience – but it is *Woman's Weekly's* cook, Cécile, who really sets to work on behalf of the Ministry of Food. Each week, her recipes and advice help readers to rise to the challenges presented by rationing, showing them, as they did during the year following the Armistice, how to eke the most from an increasingly limited larder. Some of her cookery pages echo official advice directly, for instance by suggesting that readers soak salt fish for twenty-four hours before cooking;⁵³ others suggest inventive, tasty ways of using the rations allotted by the Ministry. Potatoes, filling and readily available, are a staple, featuring in pancakes, splits, pastry and a steamed gravy pudding (suet pudding with gravy poured over it) “To Serve Instead Of Meat” – as during 1918 and 1919, meat-free recipes testify to the latter's scarcity.⁵⁴ Carrots, also easily procured, replace fruit in tarts, and, in a greater quantity than orange peel,

⁵¹ “the present allowance of [dried egg] [...] means a dozen eggs a *week* for the average family, more than most people used before the war!” (Ministry of Food, “No Egg Shortage,” *WW* 8 Jan 1944, 56).

⁵² Ministry of Food directives emphasise the importance of nutrition, particularly for children (e.g. “Let's Talk About Food,” *WW* 5 Jul 1941, bc); a Crookes' halibut liver oil advert lectures housewives on the importance of vitamins A and D to “the nation's diet” and Cadbury's milk chocolate, advertisers claim, is an excellent source of rationed milk for children (advert, “Crookes,” *WW* 1 Mar 1941, 301; advert, “Cadbury's,” *WW* 1 Feb 1941, 166).

⁵³ Ministry of Food, “New ways with the new salt fish,” *WW* 12 Feb 1944, 191; Cécile, “Curried Fish,” *WW* 15 Jan 1944, 68.

⁵⁴ Cécile, “Steamed Gravy Pudding,” *WW* 16 Jan 1943, 76.

“Wartime” marmalade.⁵⁵ Dried fruit replaces sugar in cakes;⁵⁶ arguably less palatable substitute ingredients include dried egg, dried milk, and lemon substitute, used to gel homemade preserves.⁵⁷ As during 1918 and 1919, Cécile tackles culinary hardships cheerfully, echoing the Ministry of Food’s enthusiasm by introducing pancakes made from dried egg and dried milk as “Another Thrilling Recipe Which Will Be A Delight To Make”⁵⁸ – one suspects that her optimism may have been misplaced. Attractive serving suggestions compensate for limited or boring ingredients: meagre “lines of custard poured, a spoonful at a time, from the top” of a Christmas pudding look elegant in their photograph,⁵⁹ and readers are assured that potatoes mashed with flour, margarine, milk, nutmeg, and “cheese – if available” will “Look [...] Delightful” if served in scallop shells.⁶⁰ Cécile’s upbeat attitude, which exemplifies the “buoyant cheerfulness” characterising the editorial approaches of wartime women’s magazines,⁶¹ makes performing one’s patriotic duty on the kitchen front seem pleasurable; by 1943, her name has even acquired an *é*, presumably to add a touch of French sophistication to her boring wartime fare. Presenting her advice for coping with rationing and shortages so positively, Cécile redeploys the positivity that *Woman’s Weekly* displayed towards hard domestic labour during previous years covered by this study as a means of boosting readers’ morale.

⁵⁵ “This Week Cecile Tells Us How To Make A Novel Dish – Carrot Tarts” (Cecile, “Join Cecile’s Cookery Class!” WW 31 Jan 1942, 135); C, “Marmalade From Orange Rinds,” WW 11 Dec 1943, 656.

⁵⁶ Cécile, “Prune Cake,” WW 22 May 1943, 579.

⁵⁷ Cécile, “Scrambled Eggs,” WW 3 Apr 1943, 371; C, “Creamy Milk Pudding Made With Household Milk,” WW 6 Mar 1943, 268; C, “Make Your Marrow Jam!” WW 13 Sept 1941, 340.

⁵⁸ Cécile, “Pancakes And Fried Apple Rings,” WW 4 Dec 1943, 632.

⁵⁹ Cécile, “Make These Nice Things For Xmas!” WW 9 Dec 1944, 651.

⁶⁰ Cecile, “Scalloped Potatoes!” WW 7 Jun 1941, 770.

⁶¹ White, *Magazines*, 123.

Offering another point of continuity between *Woman's Weekly's* pre-war past and wartime present, Cécile's cookery pages carry their interwar function and values into the circumstances of war: 'conscripted' by the Ministry of Food, domestic propaganda becomes official propaganda.

Deploying militaristic rhetoric to force their vital messages home, Ministry directives address housewives as servicewomen, disrupting domestic continuity by masculinising domestic femininity and presenting the home as a military post. A "Fuel Communiqué" from the Ministry of Fuel and Power likens monitoring household fuel consumption to gathering military "Intelligence" in the so-called "Battle for Fuel";⁶² the Ministry of Food positions "every kitchen [...] on the frontline".⁶³

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Fig. 21. 'Kitchener' housewives on a Ministry of Supply directive (Ministry of Supply, "Up Housewives And At 'Em!" WW 19 Oct 1940, 590).

More aggressively, the Ministry of Supply declares that by salvaging paper, metal, and bone "you are helping your country to victory" beneath a drawing of three housewives pointing directly at the reader, a pose recalling that of Lord Kitchener on a 1914 armed forces recruitment poster (Fig. 21).⁶⁴ Their masculine soldierliness surfacing in their direct gazes, square jaws, muscular forearms, and broad shoulders – the middle member of the trio even holds a metal pipe over her

⁶² Ministry for Fuel and Power, "Know Your Enemy," WW 6 Mar 1943, 276.

⁶³ Ministry of Food, "An army marches on its stomach," WW 19 Oct 1940, ii.

⁶⁴ Ministry of Supply, "Up Housewives And At 'Em!" WW 19 Oct 1940, 590; Alfred Leete, "Your Country Needs YOU," *British Posters of the First World War* by John Christopher (Stroud: Amberley Publishing, 2014), 41.

shoulder, like a rifle – these women are antithetical in appearance to the slender, sweetly pretty housewives that continue to populate *Woman's Weekly's* domestic advice columns. The latter's appearance and occupation (cooking, cleaning, caring for children) recalls Clampin's assertion that the strict preservation of pre-war gender roles in official and social discourses would, it was hoped, preserve a stabilising sense of continuity:⁶⁵ carrying on much as usual, these 'pre-war' housewives present *Woman's Weekly*, and the homes it constructs and supports, as spaces within which domestic continuity can be maintained. Presenting a radically different version of femininity, the Ministry of Supply's militaristic housewives turn the domestic environment into a battlefield. Demanding that housewives answer Britain's call to (muscular) arms, they seem to counter assumptions that, by maintaining their domestic role whilst younger or childless women are performing national service in the public sphere, *Woman's Weekly* housewives function as placeholders for women's peacetime role and status within the home. Issued on behalf of the government, these images complicate official ideologies maintaining that preserving gender roles and statuses provides a sense of stability throughout the war.

Offering another point of continuity between peace and war in *Woman's Weekly*, the dressmaking skills deployed by its readers during the interwar years have equipped them well to tackle wartime clothing shortages. Disruptions to trade and productivity caused clothing and fabrics to be rationed, necessitating great care to be taken of existing garments and waste to be avoided when renovating or making new; the Board of Trade's Make-do and Mend scheme, launched in 1942, encouraged women to repair and adapt existing clothing,

⁶⁵ Clampin, *Advertising*, 171-172.

refashioning home dressmaking as another form of national service.⁶⁶ *Woman's Weekly* throws itself as energetically into making-do and mending as it does into tackling food rationing, publishing Board of Trade clothing directives, and echoing their advice and injunctions in its dressmaking features. Much of this advice is the same as it was during the interwar period: correspondents continue to be shown how to renovate old garments,⁶⁷ and *The London Girl* continues to dispense cheap, homemade sartorial tricks, her position as the magazine's metropolitan fashion guru, again, lending cachet to making a virtue of necessity. Inventiveness remains key to success: accessories are in, and shortages are no excuse for dressing down. "There is nothing like a good-looking belt to 'do things' for a dress" and readers can make their own, from curtain rings, carpet webbing, and shoe laces.⁶⁸ Just as Cécile's upbeat attitude towards food rationing echoes that displayed by Ministry of Food directives, *The London Girl's* positivity reflects that of Mrs Sew-and-Sew, the cartoon personality enlivening *Make-do and Mend*, on pamphlets and in the cinema as well as in domestic magazines.⁶⁹ The fashion guru's cheerfulness may hide problems delivering the scheme, at least at first: Mary Grieve, who edited *Woman* during the Second World War, recalls in her autobiography that it took "some time" for war ministries to recognise that magazines needed extra clothing coupons to "make up" their *Make-do and Mend* features,⁷⁰ and it seems reasonable to suppose that

⁶⁶ Julie Summers, *Fashion on the Ration: Style in the Second World War* (London: Profile Books, 2015), 131.

⁶⁷ E.g. *The London Girl*, "Sewing Helps You!" WW 14 Aug 1943, 175.

⁶⁸ *The London Girl*, "Whispers," WW 19 Sept 1941, 309.

⁶⁹ E.g. Board of Trade, "Meet Mrs Sew-and-Sew," WW 3 Jun 1944, ii.

⁷⁰ Mary Grieve, *Millions Made My Story* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1946), 130. On one occasion, Grieve discovered her design department making a dress for a little girl from potato-printed shroud cloth, surplus and coupon-free – this ghoulish "demonstration of make-do [...] did not get into the paper" (*Millions*, 131).

Woman's Weekly's dressmaking editors experienced the same difficulty – hence, presumably, the pattern for a “good-looking belt” made from domestic odds and ends. Making-do and Mending is no new enterprise to the housewives targeted by the publication, who, with its help, have been renovating and recycling garments throughout the interwar years. Materials may be much scarcer, but their methods are the same. Their ingenuity is probably shared by most other middle-class housewives; Penny Summerfield observes that only the very wealthy, who could afford new clothes or domestic help, or the very poor, who were too busy working to mend clothes, were unused to adapting or maintaining their wardrobes.⁷¹ To the extent that sartorial resourcefulness has been a distinction of *Woman's Weekly's* dressmaking features throughout the interwar period, then, this function of the magazine, like its employment discourses and upbeat attitude towards domestic hardship, is redeployed in the government's interests rather than introduced new, under the circumstances of total war.

Besides clothing themselves and their families, *Woman's Weekly* asks its wartime readers to dress the armed forces by knitting, a domestic craft converted by the circumstances of war into an important public service. Patterns for mittens, gloves, scarves, and an arguably-more-practical-than-stylish balaclava with earholes for headphones outfit servicemen, and a pair of knitted gloves embroidered with a floral motif reminds servicewomen that, inside their uniforms, they remain feminine.⁷² Prisoners of War are remembered too, by a

⁷¹ Penny Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives: Discourse and subjectivity in oral histories of the Second World War* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1998), 130.

⁷² “His Service Mittens!” WW 6 Jan 1940, 10; “Knitted Comforts!” WW 19 Oct 1940, 574, 660; “A Scarf In Double Knitting!” WW 13 Jan 1940, 66; “Useful Knitting For The Services!” WW 11 Jan 1941, 45, 53; “Knitted Gloves,” WW 22 Feb 1941, 256.

pattern for sturdy slippers knitted in rug-making wool.⁷³ Patterns stress the value of knitters' contributions, designating scarves "Indispensible" and the balaclava "Greatly Needed" (Fig. 22) – although the aim of these adjectives must partly be to make knitters proud of their contribution, the probable value of these garments to their recipients should not be underestimated. Lucinda Gosling stresses the usefulness of hand-knits to soldiers serving on cold, wet battlefronts during the First World War,⁷⁴ and it seems likely that gloves, scarves, and even unflattering balaclavas will have increased the physical comfort of Second World War service personnel posted in similarly inhospitable conditions.

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Fig. 22. Patterns stress the importance of knitters' contributions. ("Useful Knitting For The Services!" WW 11 Jan 1941, 45).

Thus, an exchange on Mrs Marryat's page alerts knitters to the Royal Air Force (RAF) Comforts Committee, an organisation that, seeking to broaden their contribution beyond the production of garments for family and friends, officially recognises the value of their craft to the war effort. When *Woman's Weekly* reader Penelope asks Mrs Marryat how, although she cannot afford the necessary wool, she can knit garments for the RAF, the agony aunt directs her towards the Committee,⁷⁵ which, established by the Air Council in October 1939, sought to marshal what must have been a considerable amount of public goodwill towards

⁷³ "Rug Wool Slippers for Comfort," WW 2 Jan 1943, 9.

⁷⁴ Lucinda Gosling, *Knitting for Tommy: Keeping the Great War Soldier Warm* (Stroud: The History Press), 9-10.

⁷⁵ "Mrs Marryat Advises," WW 19 Aug 1944, 244.

what was considered the most glamorous of the armed forces.⁷⁶ Outlined in its 1943 pattern book *Knitting for the RAF*, the committee's purposes were

To ascertain the requirements of the Royal Air Force in both patterns and quantities of comforts [...] To arrange for the collection and storage of gifts [...] To supervise the distribution of Comforts [...] so as to ensure fairness and economy.

Knitters like Penelope, the book explains, were to form working parties which, once registered, would be supplied with coupon-free wool to make garments as required – these would be sent to the Committee's Depot in Berkeley Square, London, and thence to RAF and WAAF service personnel. The Committee's attempt to officialise home knitters' output, by registering them and ensuring that they produce garments that fulfil military requirements in terms of function and number, constitutes one further attempt to convert domestic productivity into national service; turning her home into a factory for the manufacture of military clothing, Penelope can become a producer for her nation. Unlike patterns printed in *Woman's Weekly*, which can be knitted for family and friends on active service, those in the Comforts Committee pattern book are – if made using wool provided by the Committee – intended exclusively for strangers.⁷⁷ This measure, presumably a means of preventing knitters from using officially distributed wool for personal projects, brings knitting into the public sphere. Producing garments for service personnel she will never meet, Penelope and her fellow RAF Comforts Committee knitters volunteer as housewives to Britain.

⁷⁶ Royal Air Force Comforts Committee, *Knitting for the RAF* (London: Berkley Square, date unknown), X003-1592, Library Collection, Royal Air Force Museum, London, 1.

⁷⁷ RAFCC, *Knitting*, 2.

Woman's Weekly's wartime domestic discourses help the magazine's readers to cope with conflict-related privations in the present; in redeploying interwar values and skills, they maintain continuity with the pre-war past. It is also possible that they are produced with an eye to Britain's post-war future. Considering Make-do and Mend in relation to wartime gender concerns, Julie Summers suggests that the scheme, besides being a practical necessity, was a means of preserving pre-war femininity for post-war society;⁷⁸ in the light of her suggestion, the knitters clothing service personnel, and even the servicewomen performing domestic service for their male comrades, to whom they are subordinate, are, like the pretty housewives populating the magazine's domestic advice columns, place-markers of pre-war domestic femininity. It may well be that, in thus embodying a reassuring promise that gender norms will resume after the war, *Woman's Weekly* readers' domestic personas constitute attempts to ensure that the feared masculinisation of women through national service does not take place – I prefer to position them within an additional narrative, however. Rather than perceiving models of masculinised and domesticated femininity in wartime issues of the magazine as antagonistic, I view them as co-existing reflections of the myriad roles expected of its readers within the circumstances of war, and of their assumed capability of carrying them out. As Jane Waller and Michael Vaughan-Rees point out, wartime domestic magazines instil in their readers “a sense of pride in their ability to survive hardship and to undertake tasks of which, up till then, they had been judged incapable”.⁷⁹ Perhaps, therefore, rather than being interpreted as a battleground between peacetime and

⁷⁸ Summers, *Fashion*, 131.

⁷⁹ Vaughan-Rees and Waller, *Women*, 127.

wartime femininity, *Woman's Weekly's* employment and domestic discourses should be viewed as a celebration of its readers' abilities and adaptability during a period of national emergency.

Relationships and sex

In 1939, The Man Who Sees shared his vision of an urban utopia with *Woman's Weekly* readers, in which women – by implication, themselves – would embody 'Beautiful' civic morality (Chapter Three). With hindsight, I suggested, this vision prepared them to carry out an important aspect of their national service: helping to ensure that British civic morality would not be damaged by the circumstances of war. In exploring this suggestion in wartime *Woman's Weekly*, this section will examine the role of its agony aunt, Mrs Marryat, in closer detail than in previous chapters. Surveying her approach to tackling wartime relationship dilemmas, it will examine how she exploits romance as a means of encouraging readers to conform to the standards of behaviour expected by both herself and Britain, ensuring that official concerns frame their relationship conduct as a matter of national importance. The arrival of American servicemen in Britain forces *Woman's Weekly* to articulate and confront a previously unspoken sexual concern.

Mrs Marryat's wartime postbag testifies to the stress placed on *Woman's Weekly* readers' romantic relationships by lengthy separations undergone during national service. Prevented from seeing their boyfriends and husbands for perhaps years at a time, thrown into new company by geographical or professional displacement, some are (perhaps naturally) struggling to remain faithful. In each case, the agony aunt insists that her correspondent preserve her

existing relationship. Seventeen, who has fallen in love with her boyfriend's married elder brother during his three-year absence in Egypt, should "stop seeing" the latter "*at once*" (Mrs Marryat's italics);⁸⁰ G. B., who is falling back in love with an ex-boyfriend, should inform him that she is married to a man serving abroad;⁸¹ since "nothing can come of" their friendship, Worried Margaret should cease writing to the married man she met when she was evacuated to another town, although they are strongly attracted to one another.⁸² Notably, the agony aunt seems less concerned by erring husbands' conduct. Worried Wife and Mrs R's "friend" suspect their husbands of having affairs with their billet landladies, but their suspicions are probably groundless;⁸³ Doubtful Wife, who has discovered love letters to her husband from other women, should move nearer to where he is stationed, since his flirtations indicate that he is missing her;⁸⁴ Heartbroken, whose husband has fallen in love with a colleague, should divert herself with home improvements.⁸⁵ Mrs Marryat's apparent lack of concern about these husbands' behaviour may be partly due to the nature of her column – she cannot communicate with them directly – and in any case, she may wish to help her correspondents avoid divorce, an "expensive and messy ordeal" during the early 1940s.⁸⁶ Her suggestions that readers should ignore unfaithfulness, or address their husbands' conduct by altering their own, are, however, indicative of sexual double standards in a culture that expected married

⁸⁰ "Mrs Marryat Advises," WW 4 May 1940, 895.

⁸¹ "Mrs Marryat Advises," WW 7 Sept 1940, 895.

⁸² "Mrs Marryat Advises," WW 10 Jan 1942, 64.

⁸³ "Mrs Marryat Advises," WW 9 Mar 1940, 475; WW 8 May 1943, 532.

⁸⁴ "Mrs Marryat Advises," WW 27 Sept 1941, 416.

⁸⁵ "Mrs Marryat Advises," WW 24 Jan 1942, 128.

⁸⁶ Barbara G. Friedman, *From the Battlefield to the Bridal Suite* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2007), 113.

servicemen to have affairs, whilst insisting that their wives remain faithful.⁸⁷

Recalling The Man Who Sees' pre-war hope that *Woman's Weekly* readers would embody 'Beautiful' civic morality, Mrs Marryat appoints them keepers of respectable sexual conduct in wartime Britain.

Mrs Marryat's response to Sailor's Wife, who has started an affair in her husband's absence, suggests that the agony aunt wants *Woman's Weekly* readers to treat fidelity as a highly desirable form of national service. Confiding the loneliness and emotional (as well as geographical) distance from her husband that have caused her to fall for another during his long absence, Sailor's Wife articulates feelings with which other readers of Mrs Marryat's page could probably identify:

what with never seeing him and his being a poor letter writer, his letters, when they do come, don't satisfy me. He seems so far away [...] while the other man is here, seeing me every day.⁸⁸

Her predicament is echoed in Elizabeth Bowen's wartime novel *The Heat of the Day* by Louie, who, lonely in the absence of her soldier husband, also has compensatory affairs – "she felt nearer Tom with any man than with no man".⁸⁹ Mrs Marryat appears unsympathetic however, and berates Sailor's Wife soundly for her conduct:

if you were to let [him] down while he was away doing his perilous duty, you would be doing something very base [...] [he] will be proud of you, as of a woman who has stood by him through all these long years of war, instead of despising you as he would [...] if he knew your love wasn't [...] strong enough [...] to stand the test of time and absence.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Goodman, "'Patriotic Femininity'," 289; Friedman, *Battlefront*, 5.

⁸⁸ "Mrs Marryat Advises," WW 30 Oct 1943, 504.

⁸⁹ Elizabeth Bowen, *The Heat of the Day* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1949), 139.

⁹⁰ "Mrs Marryat Advises," WW 30 Oct 1943, 504.

Suggesting that there is something especially dishonourable about having an affair whilst her husband is away fighting to protect his country, Mrs Marryat implies that by remaining faithful, Sailor's Wife will be performing important national service of her own; articulating her advice in passionate hyperbole, she appeals to her correspondent's patriotism through her romantic sensibilities, inviting her to view herself as a constant heroine who nobly resists temptation in anticipation of joyful reunion with her courageous husband. In this respect, Sailor's Wife's literary precedents include Jane Austen's Anne Elliot who, remaining in love with Captain Frederick Wentworth throughout his seven-year absence, turns down another man's proposal,⁹¹ and Homer's Penelope, wife of Ulysses, who refuses multiple suitors during her husband's long journey home from the Trojan Wars;⁹² Mrs Marryat thus interpolates her correspondent into a centuries-old romantic tradition of wartime fidelity, a literary gesture towards continuity with the past. Available to all who read *Woman's Weekly*, the agony aunt's advice is communal as well as individual: implicitly, she invites all readers to identify with her correspondents, to project their own experiences onto theirs, and to tackle them using her advice. Readers' relationship with these correspondents is, therefore, very similar to their relationship with romance heroines, and herein, perhaps, lies the attraction of Mrs Marryat's agony page. In providing real-life romantic dilemmas such as that experienced by Sailor's Wife with the potential to conclude satisfactorily, the agony aunt has the power, potentially, to merge fantasy with actuality, to realise romance.

⁹¹ Jane Austen, *Persuasion* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1965 [1818]).

⁹² Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. Robert Fitzgerald (Atlanta: Ga Communications and Studies Inc., 1961 [c. 1200-800 BC]).

Mrs Marryat's presentation of marital fidelity as patriotism is reproduced by fictional romances in wartime *Woman's Weekly*, which, inviting readers to identify with heroines experiencing similar relationship dilemmas in similar circumstances, anticipate that they will receive the same reward for their constancy. One story in particular stands out for dramatising situations addressed by the agony aunt. In "Dear John" by Roma Carey, Linda ends her engagement to her childhood sweetheart John in anticipation of a proposal from Bruce, who has been courting her in John's absence aboard a minesweeper. Instead of proposing however, Bruce announces that he is being sent to Canada for the duration, where he will join his wife and son: realising that true love is achieved through years of steady companionship rather than a whirlwind fling, Linda asks for, and receives, John's forgiveness, and they renew their engagement.⁹³ Highlighting one of the dangers of trusting a man one barely knows, Linda's doomed romance with Bruce is a cautionary tale for readers who, like Mrs Marryat's correspondent Cherrie, are uncertain of the marital status of boyfriends they meet on national service;⁹⁴ likewise, Linda's story reinforces the agony aunt's advice to Brown Eyes, whose feelings for an airman with whom she "fell madly in love at first sight" are, the agony aunt assures her, a passing infatuation rather than grounds for leaving her long-term boyfriend.⁹⁵ Ironically however, *Woman's Weekly's* fictional romances may also be complicit in tempting readers astray. Diana, heroine of "The Censor Was An Ogre" by Mary Howarth, decides against betraying her steady boyfriend Gordon with a glamorous Spitfire pilot following a conversation with her aunt, who recalls how she managed to

⁹³ Roma Carey, "Dear John," *WW* 4 May 1940, 843-846, 887-888, 891.

⁹⁴ "Mrs Marryat Advises," *WW* 5 Apr 1941, 495.

⁹⁵ "Mrs Marryat Advises," *WW* 29 Jun 1940, 1235.

overcome similar temptations whilst courting her uncle during the First World War:

once or twice I was on the verge of doing something rather silly, but somehow I managed to stop [...] You see, I knew I was a bit flighty [...] and I mistrusted my emotions. There's so much to stir them in war-time – pity, hero-worship, loneliness.⁹⁶

Portraying an experienced older woman giving 'correct' advice to a younger, "The Censor Was An Ogre" validates Mrs Marryat's confidential relationship with her correspondents; unfortunately for readers like Diana however, the drawings of handsome uniformed servicemen illustrating this and other stories may be partly responsible for producing the hero-worship they are counselled against (Fig. 23).

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Fig. 23. Romance heroes in uniform (Derek in "Foster-Mother" by Jane Hampton, WW 17 Jan 1942, 67; Roderick in "Merryweather" by Esther Wyndham, WW 10 Jan 1942, 41).

In modelling correct patriotic sexual conduct, these *Woman's Weekly* romances offer narrative resolution to some of the relationship dilemmas experienced by its readers. In this respect, they compensate for a lack of resolution in Mrs Marryat's agony column: unless correspondents report back, which they rarely do, readers will never know whether or not the agony aunt's advice was effective. Resolving happily, these narratives imply that it was, and

⁹⁶ Mary Howarth, "The Censor Was An Ogre," WW 8 Jan 1944, 55.

that if *Woman's Weekly* readers desire their own romances to end equally happily, they should act as Mrs Marryat instructs.

Within the context of military concerns, *Woman's Weekly's* patriotic policing of its readers' relationship conduct becomes both a form of official surveillance and an attempt to prevent them from experiencing the damaging social and economic consequences of infidelity. British military officials took women's wartime sexual conduct extremely seriously, treating servicemen's worries about their wives and girlfriends' fidelity as "a significant factor in causing neurosis, unofficial absence and a reduction in the overall commitment and efficacy of the war effort"⁹⁷ – women's infidelity could, they believed, damage fighting men's ability to defend themselves and their country. Making *Woman's Weekly* readers aware of these official concerns, and their duty to quell them, fictional heroine Queenie's mother-in-law explains that,

[w]hen a man's in mortal peril, he wants to be absolutely sure that the woman he loves is alone [...] if we allow one tiny doubt to shadow their minds we definitely take away from their fighting fitness.⁹⁸

Again, a romance story in the magazine validates its more direct conduct advice by deploying the 'agony column' trope of an older, more experienced woman advising a younger; there is a serious point to her romantic advice, for the consequences of infidelity, if brought to official attention, could be extremely damaging for the woman. Phil Goodman notes that, if a serviceman's domestic trouble was serious, he could apply for compassionate leave, and local police would investigate the conduct of his wife.⁹⁹ If she was found to have been

⁹⁷ Mary Howarth, "The Censor Was An Ogre," *WW* 8 Jan 1944, 55.

⁹⁸ Doris Creese, "Secret Armour," *WW* 21 Nov 1942, 568.

⁹⁹ Goodman, "'Patriotic Femininity,'" 289.

unfaithful, the army could stop her family allowance, with or without her husband's agreement¹⁰⁰ – presumably in hopes that her subsequent predicament would warn other wives against similar behaviour. Patriotically deploying its romance discourses to make fidelity appear desirable, *Woman's Weekly* seeks to govern its readers' sexual conduct on behalf of the British military authorities. Since wives on low incomes would be particularly badly affected by having their allowances stopped, this punishment seems to reflect a desire to punish working-class female infidelity in particular; in this respect, *Woman's Weekly* may be trying to help its readers achieve greater distance from working-class women through their conduct, although on this occasion its concern may also be a more practical acknowledgement of their relatively limited financial circumstances. In any case, since a wife's infidelity, real or merely suspected, could make her the subject of neighbourhood gossip, her reputation could be damaged even without official intervention.¹⁰¹ Again, their predicament is explored in Bowen's *The Heat of the Day*. Louie is made pregnant by a compensatory boyfriend and, having failed to persuade her to have an abortion, her friend Connie persuades her to move to a different area of London because "who knew who might not take it upon themselves to write Tom one of those wicked letters?"¹⁰² Given, then, that infidelity could have such serious consequences, *Woman's Weekly's* insistence that its readers remain faithful to absent boyfriends and husbands seems to be underpinned by concern for their economic and social wellbeing as much as by patriotism. Although perhaps genuinely concerned for the emotional

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 289-290.

¹⁰² Bowen, *Heat*, 315. Tom is killed in action before he can discover his wife's illegitimate pregnancy (ibid., 317).

welfare and efficacy of Britain's fighting men, Mrs Marryat and the magazine's romance fiction are also, it seems, eager to help their readers avoid the upset and shame of having their conduct investigated, by the police or by their neighbours, and to prevent them from putting their families' incomes as well as their reputations at risk.

Anxieties surrounding women's capacity to remain faithful to men serving abroad were exacerbated by the presence in Britain of "glamorous" allied servicemen¹⁰³ – particularly Americans, who arrived in the country when America entered the war in early 1942.¹⁰⁴ Better paid, better dressed, and less reserved than British men, GIs¹⁰⁵ were something of a romantic sensation,¹⁰⁶ and military officials became concerned about the impact that media accounts of their fraternisation with British women could have on the morale of servicemen serving abroad.¹⁰⁷ Perhaps assuming itself unlikely to be read by frontline troops, *Woman's Weekly* makes no attempt to prevent this fraternisation – indeed, the magazine encourages it, The London Girl noting her appreciation of American accents and terms of endearment,¹⁰⁸ translating GI slang¹⁰⁹ and introducing American fashions,¹¹⁰ and Cécile helping readers to make GIs billeted with them "feel at home" with instructions for preparing Hamburg steaks, meat loaf, and

¹⁰³ Ibid., 288.

¹⁰⁴ Sonya O. Rose, *Which People's War? National Identity and Citizenship in Britain 1939-1935* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 74-75; Friedman, *Battlefront*, 1; Vaughan-Rees and Waller, *Women*, 117.

¹⁰⁵ US servicemen were nicknamed GIs after the "Government Issue" stamp on their uniforms and equipment.

¹⁰⁶ Friedman, *Battlefront*, 1; Virginia Nicholson, *Millions Like Us: Women's Lives in War and Peace 1939-1949* (London: Viking, 2007), 194-195, 199.

¹⁰⁷ Friedman, *Battlefront*, 2.

¹⁰⁸ The London Girl, "Whispers," WW 14 Aug 1943, 169.

¹⁰⁹ The London Girl, "Whispers," WW 1 Jan 1944, 1.

¹¹⁰ The London Girl, "Whispers," WW 26 Feb 1944, 225.

shortcake.¹¹¹ Such enthusiasm implicitly rejects official concerns about GIs' relations with British women, which are not treated as concerning by the magazine's relationship conduct discourses either. Mrs Marryat counsels one correspondent against marrying the GI she met "just the other day" – but aside from this piece of advice, which she would presumably give regardless of the man's nationality, the magazine is positive about GIs, presenting them as desirable marriage prospects: a strong romantic endorsement of male morals and conduct. A fictional GI hero behaves honourably towards his British heroine, waiting for his ill-matched fiancée to release him voluntarily from their engagement before declaring himself and proposing;¹¹² anticipating GI brides, The London Girl suggests suitable presents, and quotes extracts from *Good Housekeeping* publication *Bride's Guide to the USA*.¹¹³ Enabling even readers who do not look forward to marrying GIs to dream about beginning new lives in America, The London Girl reinforces the magazine's defiance of military officials' concern, although perhaps the fictional GI-hero's upstanding conduct might also be used to gauge the actions of his less well-intentioned real-life counterparts: just as romance heroines show readers how to behave towards men, heroes indicate the behaviour they ought to expect in return.

Since *Woman's Weekly* explicitly encourages its readers to help counter official concerns surrounding women's sexual conduct and servicemen's morale, its apparent defiance of more specific concerns relating to GIs is noteworthy. It is possible that the magazine felt that, given GIs' attractiveness, attempts to repel

¹¹¹ Cécile, "Their Favourites," WW 19 Feb 1944, 218.

¹¹² Anne Vernon, "The Girl He Left Behind Him," WW 24 Mar 1945, 318-321.

¹¹³ The London Girl, "Whispers," WW 24 Mar 1945, 309; "Whispers," WW 23 Apr 1945, 449.

them would be unpopular and unsuccessful: Mary Grieve recalls that, although *Woman's* editors shared Ministry of Information concerns about their conduct, “since the American male [...] was a well-paid serviceman and had perks at his disposal” they felt that warnings would have little effect on readers, and decided not to publish any.¹¹⁴ If *Woman's Weekly's* editors made a similar decision, then its positive portrayal of American servicemen constitutes a prioritisation of circulation figures over patriotism. Besides, perhaps the magazine believes its readers' behaviour towards GIs to be well enough regulated by its more general sexual conduct advice; it may even side with single readers who aspire to marry Americans. Barbara Friedman suggests that 1942 and 1946 issues of *Woman's Own* actively encouraged readers to seek out GI husbands, recognising that, to women enduring wartime deprivations or looking forward to the continuation of rationing post war, they offered genuine opportunities to move to the “land of plenty” across the Atlantic.¹¹⁵ Although *Woman's Weekly* does not recommend that its single readers fraternise as closely with American servicemen as these issues of *Woman's Own* seem to have done, its warmth towards GIs suggests that, contrary to official attitudes, it would not condemn them for choosing American husbands. In this respect, the magazine allows its readers' wartime romantic interests to diverge from the interests of their country, encouraging them to digress from official attitudes in doing so.

In 1943, Ministry of Health directives warning readers about venereal disease (VD) appear in *Woman's Weekly*. The timing of their appearance suggests that

¹¹⁴ Grieve, *Millions*, 129.

¹¹⁵ Friedman, *Battlefront*, 120.

anxieties surrounding women's sexual conduct have increased since the start of the conflict, possibly owing to the influence of the GIs: whilst rates of venereal disease rose by 70 per cent between September 1939 and mid-1941, following the Americans' arrival in 1942 the figures escalated steeply.¹¹⁶ Whatever the extent of GIs' culpability, these statistics suggest that public attitudes towards extramarital sex loosened dramatically within wartime conditions. The VD directives in *Woman's Weekly*, however, suggest that sexual knowledge remained low: describing symptoms and explaining transmission, they assume, as Vaughan-Rees and Waller suggest, an ignorant readership.¹¹⁷ In agreeing to participate in the Ministry of Health's campaign to educate the wartime public about VD, *Woman's Weekly* is acting more boldly than popular newspapers such as the *Daily Mirror*, which, Adrian Bingham records, refused to publish directives they deemed unsuitable for their readers.¹¹⁸ Bingham attributes these scruples to a desire to preserve the respectability of publications and their readers¹¹⁹ – especially the working classes and women, in whose possession “sexual knowledge” had been perceived to threaten social morality in early-mid-twentieth-century Britain.¹²⁰ Discussing VD in direct terms, Ministry of Health directives force *Woman's Weekly* to address its readers' sexuality far more explicitly than it did during the interwar period, when advice about sex and reproduction was cloaked by euphemism and silence. Besides flagging up one further instance of a publication prioritising consideration for its readers over support for the war government, Bingham's observations raise the possibility that

¹¹⁶ Vaughan-Rees and Waller, *Women*, 76.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 77.

¹¹⁸ Adrian Bingham, “The British Popular Press and Venereal Disease during the Second World War,” *The Historical Journal* Volume 48, Number 4 (2005): 1055-1056.

¹¹⁹ Bingham, “Press,” 1056.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 1058.

Woman's Weekly's participation in the Ministry of Health's campaign against VD may expose assumptions relating to the gender and class of its target readership.

The wartime appearance of VD directives in *Woman's Weekly* constitutes a sea change in the magazine's attitude towards its readers' sexuality, and is therefore a point of wartime discontinuity with the past. Throughout the interwar years, sex advice had been issued on a need-to-know basis, in language that protected the innocence of readers for whom sexual knowledge would not have been respectable; now, *all* readers are being ordered to become knowing, and in direct terms. "Professional prostitutes are not the only spreaders of these diseases; anyone who has sexual relations with a casual acquaintance risks picking up venereal disease".¹²¹ A cursory overview of the magazine's treatment of sex since November 1918 illustrates this change. During the year immediately following the Armistice, 'female pills' claiming to alleviate symptoms associated with periods, pregnancy, and the menopause, none of which are named, represent the extent of advertised products relating to readers' reproductive health; promises by Mrs Marryat to supply unspecified information privately, made in response to unpublished letters, suggest that they may be consulting her for advice about sex, and that this advice is not deemed suitable for all.¹²² By 1928, sanitary towel adverts represent more open treatment of readers' reproductive systems,¹²³ but sex remains taboo: contraceptives are not advertised, and Mrs

¹²¹ Ministry of Health, "Do YOU know these facts?" WW 18 Mar 1944, iii.

¹²² E.g. "'Louise.' – Send a stamped addressed envelope, and repeat query. I can then give you the advice you want. I can't give it here" (Mary Marryat, "Don't Let Your Life Make You," WW 8 Feb 1919, 112).

¹²³ E.g. advert, "Mene" sanitary towels, WW 7 Jan 1928, 33; advert, "Pheltose" sanitary belt, WW 4 Feb 1928, 206.

Marryat still responds to unpublished letters with promises to write privately.¹²⁴ By 1938, *Woman's Weekly* treats its readers' sexual health with yet more openness, advertising a greater range of menstrual products and even Rendells brand of contraceptives; the latter adverts, however, recommending a pamphlet called *Hygiene for Women* but revealing nothing about its contents or purpose, are heavily euphemistic, and Mrs Marryat remains tight-lipped about sex, promising to advise interested parties privately.¹²⁵ Kate Fisher points out that euphemisms require the correct frame of reference in order to be understood:¹²⁶ rather than reluctance to advise readers on sexual matters, the magazine's approach signals its desire to ring-fence this information for sexually experienced readers, assumedly wives, although doubtless many 'innocent' readers found obscurity suggestive in itself. Ministry of Health VD directives may therefore have shocked *Woman's Weekly* readers used to having their sexuality treated with such delicacy in the magazine.

Kate Fisher's oral history investigation *Birth Control, Sex and Marriage in Britain* suggests that *Woman's Weekly*'s euphemistic approach to discussing its interwar readership's sexuality may have been class based, motivated by their desire to distance themselves from working-class women whilst not yet feeling fully confident in their own middle-class status. According to Fisher, female knowledge of birth control was distinctive of both middle-class and working-

¹²⁴ In response to her unpublished letter, Mrs Marryat explains to Blue Bird, "I regret I could not possibly go into the matter you write about on this page. Have you a mother? Why not consult her or let me write to you by post?" ("Mrs Marryat Advises," WW 1 Dec 1928, 1036).

¹²⁵ E.g. "I cannot give you the advice you want here, but if you will write again, sending me a stamped, self-addressed envelope, I will let you have the names of two little books which I think will be very useful to you" ("Mrs Marryat Advises," WW 2 Sept 1939, 496).

¹²⁶ Kate Fisher, *Birth Control, Sex and Marriage in Britain 1918-1960* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 48.

class culture in interwar Britain, middle-class women accessing information from books such as Marie Stopes' 1918 *Married Love*, and their working-class counterparts discussing methods with male colleagues at work.¹²⁷ But whilst middle-class women seem to have treated birth control as a topic for serious debate, working-class women were inclined to claim ignorance: in a culture that expected working-class men to know more about contraception than women, and that conflated sexual knowledge with sexual experience, they used sexual ignorance to preserve gender distinctions in mixed-gender workplaces, and to demonstrate their sexual respectability.¹²⁸ Similar scruples probably account for interwar *Woman's Weekly's* coded sexual discourses, in which words like "hygienic" distance advertised products, the magazine, and readers from disreputability. Not yet fully confident in their middle-class status, they lack the confidence to participate in middle-class debates about sexuality, and seek to preserve their reputations as working-class women do, by publically maintaining sexual innocence until after they are married. Interwar *Woman's Weekly's* euphemistic treatment of sex, therefore, acknowledges simultaneously married or engaged readers' desire to gain useful sexual knowledge, and unmarried readers' desire to retain their respectability. These scruples, however, are destroyed by the circumstances of war. Amid official fears about the rapid spread of syphilis and gonorrhoea, *Woman's Weekly* is forced to confront its readers' sexuality in public. This presents a moment of simultaneous change and continuity in the wartime magazine: although inasmuch as it makes unmarried readers sexually knowing, the Ministry of Health campaign contravenes *Woman's Weekly's*

¹²⁷ Fisher, *Birth Control*, 46, 65.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 57-66.

preservation of its pre-war values, to the extent that it makes extramarital sex seem undesirable, it encourages readers to keep up their guardianship of sexual morality. Within the context of this campaign, *Woman's Weekly's* romantic insistence that its readers stay chaste and loyal gains an extra, coded imperative: preserving fighting men's physical fitness in addition to their psychological wellbeing.

Romances of ordinary life

Besides helping *Woman's Weekly* readers to perform their war service, narratives of domestic continuity help them to escape, and find consolation for, the more horrific or tragic aspects of total war. In doing so, they invoke, and invert, a key function of romance, and encourage *Woman's Weekly* readers to feel pride in themselves, and in their fighting menfolk, as ordinary citizens.

Wartime *Woman's Weekly* appears fully aware of the war's potentially traumatic impact on its readers, and seems eager to support them through this, as well as through their war service. Alongside features encouraging readers to serve their country, coping and recovery strategies proliferate; reinforcing the magazine's sense of continuity, some deploy normality as a palliative. Adverts for nerve tonics and sleeping pills target women who, like Mass-Observation diarist housewife Nella Last, may be experiencing insomnia, depression, anxiety, and "fretty nerves" as a consequence of bombing raids, worrying about loved ones, and the effort of combining housework with employment outside the home.¹²⁹ Bereavement is addressed by sentimental poems, which offer readers

¹²⁹ Nella Last, *Nella Last's War: The Second World War Diaries of Housewife*, 49, ed. Richard Broad and Suzie Fleming (London: Profile Books, 2006), 16.

frameworks for grieving, and, by provoking ‘easy’ tears, might help emotional healing. Fulfilling his role as paternal advisor, *The Man Who Sees* suggests strategies for coping with anxiety caused by waiting for news of loved ones on active service, depression, bereavement, and grieving;¹³⁰ offering continuity as solace and consolation, he urges bereaved readers to resume normal life as soon as the initial shock has passed. Knitting, a touchstone of domestic life in *Woman’s Weekly* throughout the interwar period, is conceived as occupational therapy by The London Girl, who advises readers to “pick up [their] knitting [...] in times of stress”¹³¹ and to keep two projects on the go simultaneously, one complicated, for when they are feeling positive, and one simple, for when they are feeling down and less inclined to concentration.¹³² Photographs indicate that knitting was a popular means of passing time spent in air raid shelters, where, a scene from popular wartime film *Mrs Miniver* suggests, it may have helped to preserve a comforting sense of normality as well as a diversion. During a raid that partially destroys her home, Mrs Miniver (Greer Garson) knits in her family’s back-garden shelter, whilst, over after-dinner coffee and biscuits, holding an ordinary conversation with her husband (Walter Pidgeon) about the imminent return of their eldest son and his wife from their honeymoon; besides providing her with a diversionary occupation, knitting helps the couple maintain their usual evening routine, presumably a source of comfort to themselves and also to their younger children, who are trying to sleep in bunks while the shelter

¹³⁰ The Man Who Sees, “An Anxious Mind,” WW 16 Sept 1944, 316, 332-333; TMWS, “Give Her A Treat,” WW 13 Feb 1943, 187; TMWS, “His Colours On The Shoulder,” WW 19 Sept 1942, 327; TMWS, “The Shallows,” WW 30 Jan 1943, 128, 137.

¹³¹ The London Girl, “Whispers,” WW 22 Jun 1940, 1157.

¹³² The London Girl, “Whispers,” WW 11 Apr 1942, 411.

rocks around them.¹³³ A similar desire for normality probably explains why, although *Woman's Weekly* encourages knitters to produce garments for service personnel, the overwhelming majority of its wartime knitting patterns are not overtly war-related: jumpers, cardigans, and tea-cosies help readers work threads of ordinary domestic life into extraordinary circumstances, palliating traumatic experiences with the comforting continuation of normality.

Perhaps one of the strongest palliatives *Woman's Weekly* has to offer, however, is its refusal to depict the events causing such traumas. This refusal seems deliberate. Making a rare statement of editorial intent, *The London Girl* states that, “[b]ecause we have wanted to divert you [...] we have not talked over-much about this war”;¹³⁴ her words recall the magazine’s avoidance of the possibility of conflict between September 1938 and September 1939, and indicate that this, too, was deliberate. From the context of *The London Girl*’s statement, made in May 1940, ‘diversion’ appears to consist of maintaining a sense of continuing domestic normality. During the autumn of that year, when the Luftwaffe was blitzing London, she continues to gush over the latest fashions,¹³⁵ the Beauty Expert continues to improve readers’ personal appearance,¹³⁶ and *The Matron* continues to soothe anxious mothers;¹³⁷ adverts for domestic cleaning products¹³⁸ encourage readers to care for their homes, or perhaps repair bomb damage, although – not wanting to ‘talk over-much about

¹³³ *Mrs Miniver*, directed by William Wyler (1942, London: Warner Home Video [UK], 2004), DVD.

¹³⁴ “Whispers,” *WW* 25 May 1940, 993.

¹³⁵ “I am intrigued by the new autograph brooches” (*The London Girl*, “Whispers,” *WW* 14 Sept 1940, 377).

¹³⁶ Beauty Expert, “Beauty Queries,” *WW* 21 Sept 1940, 418.

¹³⁷ *The Matron*, “A Mother’s Query,” *WW* 5 Oct 1940, 512.

¹³⁸ E.g. advert, “Windolene” window cleaner, *WW* 5 Oct 1940, iii; advert, “Cobra” wax floor polish, *WW* 12 Oct 1940, 560.

this war’? – advertisers do not associate these products with this purpose. The magazine’s undamaged domestic interiors visually reinforce this sense of life continuing as usual amidst bombing raids.

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Fig. 24. Undamaged domestic interiors in wartime *Woman’s Weekly* (dress model in “Whispers” by The London Girl, WW 20 Jan 1940, 73; housewife in “Macaroni Cheese” by Cécile, WW 20 Feb 1943, 216).

Dress models pose next to windows free from the criss-crossing tape used to prevent glass from injuring people if a bomb exploded nearby,¹³⁹ and the kitchen windows belonging to Cécile’s housewives are framed by gingham rather than blackout curtains (Fig. 24); resembling the rooms inhabited by fictional characters, which remain unprotected (no window tape, no sandbags, no under-the-table Morrison shelters, no fire fighting equipment) and undamaged even though the action they stage is set during the violent present, these pre-war images of home conjure a romance of normality. To readers experiencing the Blitz, these peaceful images may have supplied comfort, and maybe an implicit promise that normal life will eventually resume; in this respect, just as it requires its readers to act as place-markers for pre-war femininity, the magazine designates itself place-marker for their pre-war homes.

By presenting normality as escapism from the war, *Woman’s Weekly* inverts a key component of romance, which generally presents extraordinary events as escapism from dull, everyday monotony. Aptly, this inversion is

¹³⁹ A common cause of minor injury to civilians (George Rodger, *The Blitz: The Photography of George Rodger* [London and New York: Penguin Books, 1990], 112).

embodied in the ‘ordinary’ characteristics of two romance heroes. Like the majority of *Woman’s Weekly*’s wartime heroes, Squadron Leader John Armitage and Flying Officer Robert Street are servicemen, demonstrating, like their First World War forbears, their masculine patriotism. Their ordinariness seems, however, antithetical to the romantic allure of Royal Air Force ‘flyers’, whose “glamorous” uniforms and “exotic” habitation of the skies captivated Britain’s wartime public.¹⁴⁰ When heroine Jane meets John, she is attracted to his staid, fatherly appearance rather than his association with the most “dashing”¹⁴¹ of the forces: “[h]is eyes were brown and twinkly, and she was pretty sure that he would wear tweeds in the ordinary way, and smoke a pipe”.¹⁴² Robert has a similarly ordinary appearance:

Nice [...] Not particularly handsome. Not extra tall [...] dependable, grey eyes. That pleasant, utterly English look of clean scrubbedness that used to go with well-worn tweeds and the scent of pipe tobacco and shaving soap. That does equally well now with well-worn, blue uniform and wings above the left pocket.¹⁴³

Perhaps rather than re-inscribing the romantic as everyday, these descriptions of John and Robert make the everyday seem romantic: just like *Woman’s Weekly* readers’ own menfolk, and indeed *Woman’s Weekly* readers themselves, they are ordinary people doing their bit in extraordinary circumstances.

The narrative’s emphasis on Robert’s “pleasant, utterly English look” implies that his ordinariness, a positive attribute, is a national characteristic. In the light of a wartime radio broadcast by writer J. B. Priestley, which resonates

¹⁴⁰ Martin Francis, *The Flyer: British Culture and the Royal Air Force 1939-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 1.

¹⁴¹ Francis, *Flyer*, 1.

¹⁴² Jane Hampton, “Easter Idyll,” *WW* 12 Apr 1941, 500.

¹⁴³ Barbara Clyde, “Why Didn’t You Tell Me?” *WW* 11 Oct 1941, 451-453, 476-479.

strongly with The Man Who Sees' idealistic pre-war vision of British society, John and Robert's appearance does indeed appeal to a distinctively 'ordinary', and distinctly comforting, sense of British patriotism. Invoking tweeds and pipes, John and Robert evoke The Man Who Sees, when, during 1939, he promoted his vision of Britain on the eve of war, a society bound by a close, 'organic' sense of community that would connect its technologised present to its pre-industrial past. Simon Featherstone highlights a similar sense of nationhood built on "community" and "continuity" in a June 1940 radio broadcast by Priestley, who likens wartime Britain to a rural village defended by ordinary citizens, who are bound by feudal ties:¹⁴⁴ broadcast less than a fortnight after the Dunkirk evacuations, and in anticipation of Britain's invasion by Germany, Priestley's "Postscript" conveys a comforting sense that the nation will survive, and that its defining values of community and continuity will ensure its survival.¹⁴⁵ Conflating pre-war with wartime masculinity, Robert's appearance in particular invokes the sense of continuity with the past with which The Man Who Sees soothed *Woman's Weekly* readers anxious about the prospect of war, and Priestley soothed BBC listeners anxious about the prospect of invasion. Looking "equally" comfortable, and equally comforting, in his pre-war tweeds and his wartime uniform, he infers that Britain is safe in the hands of ordinary citizens; moreover, his appearance implies, once the war is over, these citizens will shed their uniforms, put on their pre-war clothing, and life will continue as before. In

¹⁴⁴ Simon Featherstone, "The Nation as Pastoral in British Literature of the Second World War," *Journal of European Studies* Volume 16 (1986): 156.

¹⁴⁵ Describing his first outing with the Local Defence Volunteers, Priestley writes that, "I felt too up there a powerful and rewarding sense of community; and with it too a feeling of deep continuity. There we were, ploughman and parson, shepherd and clerk, turning out at night, as our forefathers had often done before us, to keep watch and ward over the sleeping English fields and homesteads" (*Postscripts* [London and Toronto: William Heinemann Ltd, 1940]), 9.

distinguishing him as English, Robert's appearance has an implicitly distinctive function: looking slightly frayed around the edges, he, and by association his non-fictional citizen-comrades, are differentiated from their Nazi counterparts, "characterised as vauntingly militaristic" in opposition.¹⁴⁶ Notably, John and Robert's physical appearance also distinguishes them from the tall, broad-shouldered heroes populating *Woman's Weekly* romance fiction between September 1938 and September 1939, who, I suggested, sought to demonstrate the preparedness of British men to defend their country in the event of war (Chapter Three): now that Britain is at war with Germany, John and Robert distinguish its servicemen, and the values they are defending, from the enemy. Besides, perhaps the traumatic reality of total war has made comforting ordinariness more desirable to *Woman's Weekly* readers than alpha-masculinity.

From war to peace

Throughout the Second World War, *Woman's Weekly* has sought to maintain a comforting sense of continuing normality. By underpinning readers' professional and domestic contributions to Britain's war effort with the values and attitudes it established during the interwar period, the magazine has encouraged them to preserve a stabilising, morale-boosting sense of ordinary life continuing in extraordinary circumstances. *Woman's Weekly* continues to prevent workplace femininity from being masculinised, to approach domestic hardships cheerfully, to make-do and mend clothing, to promote sexual respectability, and to provide escape from the difficulties of daily life. By maintaining these concerns, the magazine designates itself and its readers as place-markers for lower-middle-

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Rose, *War?* 79.

class domestic femininity and homes, and seeks to ensure that life will return to normal after the war. Romance remains a primary means of making certain attitudes appear desirable. As before, its heterogeneous periodical form allows potentially contradictory attitudes to co-exist, in multi-functional features that instruct, support, boost, admonish, warn, comfort, and console their readers. As before, the magazine remains conscious of its readers' implicit anxiousness to distinguish themselves from working-class women – and as before, their status and aspirations do not appear to have altered. Not working class, but not yet middle class, *Woman's Weekly's* wartime readers remain in social stasis.

Besides redeploying existing discourses and attitudes, the circumstances of total war have necessitated two major changes to *Woman's Weekly's* contents, function, and modus operandi. Disseminating official instructions and responding to – and challenging – official anxieties, the magazine voluntarily gives up its previous reluctance to engage directly with current affairs, although for palliative reasons it refuses to engage with the war's more traumatic aspects. Fears that Britain's sexual health is being damaged by widespread promiscuity force the magazine to radically alter its approach to readers' sexuality, replacing hints and euphemism with an openness that seems, in comparison to the magazine's interwar sex discourses, shocking.

From January 1945, with the end of the war in its sights, *Woman's Weekly* prepares its readers for their return to peacetime civilian life. Advertisements suggest that, another point of continuity, its post-war readership will again consist of single white-collar workers and housewives.¹⁴⁷ Adverts

¹⁴⁷ An Odo-ro-no deodorant advert depicts a servicewoman swapping her uniform for business clothing (WW 5 May 1945, iii); an advert for Parozone bleach depicts a "busy" housewife (WW 19 May 1945, 560).

anticipating the return of domestic commodities, currently in short supply or unavailable owing to the gearing of British manufacturing towards war industries, figure readers' return to civilian housewifery as their joyful entry into a world of domestic plenty. "The limited supplies of wartime will give place to the abundance of peace, and women everywhere will be able to cook and serve meals in the Phoenix clear-glass way"¹⁴⁸ declares one, figuring peace as the much-hoped-for end of rationing and shortages; "[s]oon you will see the Acme on sale again – a brand new model, in every respect as wonderful as pre-war"¹⁴⁹ declares another, anticipating domestic continuity between pre- and post-war Britain in its prediction that shortages are about to end. Peace would not, however, bring an immediate end to rationing: *Woman's Weekly's* approach to helping its post-war readership cope with continuing domestic deprivation will be addressed by the following chapter.

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Fig. 25. An 'Acme' housewife seems thrilled by the prospect of returning to her home (Advert, "Acme Wringers," WW 24 Feb 1945, 218).

"It's like a Fairy-tale come true – Back in my own home at last"¹⁵⁰ gasps the housewife advertising Acme Wringers, contemplating her kitchen sink with delight (Fig. 25). Not all *Woman's Weekly* readers anticipate their return to civilian domesticity with such joy, however: a letter to Mrs Marryat from Soldier's Wife, who is dreading having to give up "the stimulating atmosphere of

¹⁴⁸ Advert, "Phoenix" cookware, WW 24 Feb 1945, bc.

¹⁴⁹ Advert, "Acme Wringers," WW 24 Feb 1945, 218.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

business life” when her husband is demobilised, raises the possibility that some married readers may not be content to resume fulltime housewifery with the end of the war.¹⁵¹ Soldier’s Wife’s dissatisfaction with her anticipated return to the home resonates with Nella Last’s observation that women who did war service in the public sphere may find resuming domestic normality difficult: “I cannot see women settling to trivial ways – women who have done worthwhile things”.¹⁵² Chapter Five will hence interrogate *Woman’s Weekly*’s construction of its readers’ domestic roles and status during 1948 in the light of Nella’s speculation, seeking indications that they may be discontented and examining *Woman’s Weekly*’s approach to this. It will also explore how the magazine reconstructs domestic environments and relationships damaged by the war, and, in the light of continued rationing and austerity measures, probe the magazine’s engagement with the militant British Housewives’ League.

¹⁵¹ “Mrs Marryat Advises,” WW 10 Feb 1945, 168.

¹⁵² Last, *War*, 221.

Chapter Five: Austerity

1948

Woman's Weekly has entered the post-war era. Rebuilding has begun, but the present is bleak. Countering the optimism expressed by advertisements in the magazine during the war's closing months, domestic shortages are continuing, rationing has worsened, and the housewives served by the magazine are queuing for goods that may turn out to be unavailable, cooking with inadequate provisions, and patching up wardrobes using materials surplus to the armed forces. Worse off materially than they were during the war, their relative class status does not appear to have improved – although no longer expected to keep up appearances of servant-keeping, they now seem under pressure to be seen to be using domestic appliances they cannot necessarily afford, and an increasingly prosperous working class may be exacerbating their anxiousness to cement their membership of the more established middle classes. Married readers are being urged by the magazine to accept a largely domestic role in post-war society, despite the growing acceptability of working wives. Forced to cope with continuing privations, their culture seemingly under threat, and contemplating a largely homebound future, *Woman's Weekly* housewives are showing signs of discontent.

Resuming my discussion of *Woman's Weekly*'s engagement with current affairs, this chapter will suggest that it is difficult to extract the magazine's approaches to post-war austerity from party politics. Austerity measures had been put in place by Clement Attlee's 1945 Labour government, which had been

widely supported by the lower middle classes;¹ in helping its readers cope with the domestic impact of these measures, the magazine cannot avoid engaging with the policies and values of a party for which many may have voted, undermining what has so far come across as an apolitical stance. But whilst *Woman's Weekly* engages with governmental politics more directly in 1948 than it has during any of the previous peacetime years examined, the overall extent of its support for the government is difficult to establish.

As before, this chapter is divided into sections. "Austerity" examines *Woman's Weekly's* responses to continued food and clothes rationing, and other government interventions in its readers' daily lives. "Hands and hoovers" revisits the magazine's attitude towards housework, still class based, despite the by-now almost complete disappearance of domestic servants from middle-class homes. "Etiquette" returns to readers' continuing desire to distance themselves behaviourally from the working classes, whose rising incomes and confidence seem to be threatening middle-class culture. "Working wives?" examines *Woman's Weekly* readers' role in post-war society. Again, spot-comparisons with working-class *My Weekly* and middle-middle-class *Good Housekeeping* help to designate *Woman's Weekly* as lower middle class.

Austerity

Materially, 1948 was a bleak year for *Woman's Weekly* readers. Despite the optimism shown by advertisements in the magazine during the closing months of the Second World War, domestic privations had not ended when hostilities

¹ Geoffrey G. Field, *Blood, Sweat, and Toil: Remaking the British Working Class, 1949-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 377.

ceased. The effort of fighting had decimated Britain's economy, leaving the country 4.198 million pounds in debt;² to help rebuild, Attlee's Labour government introduced a programme of strict austerity, and wartime measures to reduce civilian consumption continued.³ To pay for imported food and raw materials, the bulk of Britain's productivity was geared towards export, its citizens were encouraged to consume as little as possible, and rationing and controls – of domestic hardware, furnishings, and clothing, as well as food – were kept in place or tightened.⁴ Housewives, in charge of household management, family shopping, and the provision of food, considered themselves among the most directly affected by austerity.⁵ Whilst they had tolerated rationing during the war cheerfully enough, concerns and frustrations about the quality of their restricted diet, shopping difficulties, and queuing lowered their morale during the immediate post-war years.⁶ When food rations decreased and became more volatile, their dissatisfaction grew,⁷ and some expressed their frustrations through the British Housewives' League, an organisation established in 1945 to represent their interests.⁸ *Woman's Weekly's* negotiation of domestic privations during 1948 is the focus of the first section of this chapter, which

² Patit P. Mishra, "Economy (UK)," in *The Home Front Encyclopedia: United States, Britain, and Canada in World Wars I and II. Volume One: World War I*, ed. James Ciment and Thaddeus Russell (Santa Barbara: Denver and Oxford: ABC Clío, 2007), 844 .

³ Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Austerity in Britain: Rationing, Controls, and Consumption 1939-1955* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 4-5.

⁴ Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Austerity*, 99-128; Jim Tomlinson, "The Spirit of '45? Austerity Then and Now," *Renewal: A Journal of Social Democracy* Vol. 21 No. 2 (2013): 46.

⁵ Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Austerity*, 3, 127.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 102.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 113-115.

⁸ David Kynaston, *Austerity Britain 1945-51* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007), 71; Kenneth O. Morgan, *The People's Peace: British History 1945-1989* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 77.

examines continuing government interventions in the magazine and explores its engagement with the British Housewives' League. Urged to carry on economising for Britain, *Woman's Weekly's* 1948 readers continue their wartime national service, although under Labour this role now has a socialist impulse.

Exploring *Woman's Weekly's* attitudes towards austerity as they relate to party politics, this section establishes a recurring theme of this chapter. Unlike during the war, when rationing was introduced by a coalition government, the measures to re-stabilise Britain's war-damaged economy were introduced by one ruling party, which continued using the magazine to influence housewives.⁹ The level of *Woman's Weekly's* support for austerity is thus a gauge of its support for Attlee's Labour government. Besides measures to improve Britain's finances, the magazine engages with the effects on its readers of other aspects of Labour's post-war reform schemes. After the party came to power in July 1945, it instigated change along socialist lines, nationalising institutions including the Bank of England, the coal industry, and the railways, introducing National Insurance and rent control, and establishing the National Health Service (NHS).¹⁰ Whilst *Woman's Weekly's* editorial discourses do not discuss these changes explicitly,¹¹ they respond to their effects, specifically their impact on class. Within Labour's new Welfare State, the state became more responsible for

⁹ Judy Giles suggests that *Woman's Weekly's* continued collaboration with the government was voluntary: "magazine editors worked with the new Labour government to carry messages about its social policies and to inform readers about social legislation that was of particular concern to women" (*The Parlour and the Suburb: Domestic Identities, Class, Femininity and Modernity* [Oxford and New York: Berg, 2004], 157).

¹⁰ Peter J. Madgwick et al., *Britain Since 1945* (London: Hutchinson & Co. [Publishers] Ltd, 1982), 8.

¹¹ The only direct editorial reference to the Welfare State I have found in *Woman's Weekly* 1948 is agony aunt Mrs Marryat's explanation of the NHS: "Every man, woman and child in the country, without any exception, is entitled to all the health services, whether they are within the National Health Insurance Scheme or not" ("Mrs Marryat Advises," WW 10 Jul 1948, 56).

citizens' wellbeing,¹² and the prospects of the working classes improved; the middle classes lost stability however and, as austerity continued, support for the party waned amongst middle-class voters, who were becoming increasingly impoverished, and who resented what seemed to them high levels of state intervention in their lives.¹³ *Woman's Weekly's* responses to austerity and the Welfare State offer, therefore, means to classify its 1948 readership.

Under Labour's post-war austerity programme, wartime restrictions on clothing and domestic commodities remained, and food rationing was tightened.¹⁴ *Woman's Weekly* magazines issued during 1948 reflect this. The London Girl suggests trimmings to disguise worn collars and pockets;¹⁵ taglines exhort readers to save paper;¹⁶ Cécile suggests mock ingredients;¹⁷ the Beauty Expert sighs that "none of us need to worry that we are eating too much fat these days".¹⁸ Advertisements continue their wartime practice of anticipating products' availability, apologising for their scarcity, and, in the case of Stork margarine, offering cookery tips in lieu of the product they are advertising,¹⁹ their aim being to keep commodities at the forefront of consumers' minds in expectation of their reappearance in the shops.²⁰ Similar adverts appear in comparative publication

¹² Madgwick et al, *Britain*, 8.

¹³ Morgan, *Peace*, 82.

¹⁴ Nicola Humble, *Culinary Pleasures: Cookbooks and the Transformation of British Food* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd, 2005), 115.

¹⁵ The London Girl, "Whispers," WW 4 Dec 1948, 661.

¹⁶ "Teach The Children: They Can Save Paper, Too!" WW 9 Oct 1948, 417.

¹⁷ E.g. Cécile, "A Merry Christmas Cake," WW 4 Dec 1948, 670-671, 687.

¹⁸ Beauty Expert, "Simple Beauty Routine," WW 9 Oct 1948, 418.

¹⁹ E.g. "materials are still a bit of a headache" (advert, "Acme Wringers," WW 3 Jan 1948, 26); "Turban stoned dates *will* be back some day!" (advert, "Turban" dates, WW 1 May 1948, 500); "Until Stork returns, make the fullest use of this free service [advert then recommends replacing potatoes, currently in short supply, with macaroni, spaghetti, rice or tapioca]" (advert, "Stork" margarine, WW 10 Jan 1948, 51).

²⁰ Humble, *Culinary*, 92.

Good Housekeeping,²¹ but not, notably, in *My Weekly*: their absence may have helped to create an illusion of material plenty on this title's advertising pages, but, juxtaposed with editorial reminders to recycle paper and knitting wool,²² this illusion is unconvincing. Paper rationing, which would not be lifted until the end of the decade,²³ keeps the material quality of all three publications low. *Good Housekeeping* retains its wartime 'handbag-sized' dimensions,²⁴ and *My Weekly*, still issued fortnightly, remains restricted to around twelve pages per magazine;²⁵ *Woman's Weekly*, still printed in black and white, still occupies around thirty pages, now rough, brownish, and fragile, tangibly worse in quality than during 1939.²⁶ There has, however, been one significant change to the magazine's appearance since the war: perhaps to increase its visual prominence on newsstands, its front cover has been enlivened by a strip of garish salmon pink behind the dark navy lettering of its title. The effect of this, whilst sickly, is distinctive, and salmon pink/navy blue would remain the magazine's 'trademark' colours until 1967, when full-colour front covers were introduced.²⁷ Launched after the war, this alteration to *Woman's Weekly*'s appearance reflects, as well as a desire for greater visibility, hopes for a brighter future. Reflecting the climate of austerity within which they are produced, however, its contents and material

²¹ E.g. "Like other good things, supplies [...] are still limited" (advert, "Camp" coffee, *GH* Jan 1948, 62); "you may not get it every time you ask" (advert, "Lux" laundry soap, *GH* Feb 1948, 89); "Sheer delight – when at last you find a tin of Nescafe" (advert, "Nescafe" coffee, *GH* Apr 1948, 65).

²² "No Wool," *MW* 21 Feb 1948, 12; "Every Little Helps!" *MW* 15 May 1948, 13.

²³ Howard Cox and Simon Mowatt, *Revolutions from Grub Street: A History of Magazine Publishing in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 79.

²⁴ 16cm x 22cm.

²⁵ E.g. *MW* 10 Jan 1948.

²⁶ E.g. *WW* 3 Jan 1948.

²⁷ Cynthia L. White, *Women's Magazines 1693-1968* (London: M. Joseph, 1970), Appendix VII.

quality indicate that this future will have to be postponed until Britain can afford it.

To help readers cope with austerity, *Woman's Weekly* continues to publish government Ministry directives, maintaining its wartime practice of helping to disseminate official information amongst Britain's mass populace. Unsurprisingly given the tightening of rations two years previously, food remains a pressing issue, and directives from the Ministry of Food help readers to produce meals from ingredients more limited than during the war.²⁸ Discussing nutrition for children and expectant mothers, some seem to acknowledge housewives' fears about the health effects of increased dietary restrictions;²⁹ the directive suggesting dumplings, barley, stuffing made from stale bread, and root vegetables as "tasty and satisfying" alternatives to potatoes³⁰ may be seeking to alleviate the impact of the potato crop's failure during the harsh winter of 1947-48, which restricted the weekly potato allowance to 3lb.³¹ As during the war, the Ministry of Food cultivates a chipper approach to coping with rationing, brightening directives with cheerful drawings – smiling housewives, a family picnic, an alarm clock tossing a breakfast pancake, a lush salad served with a decanter of wine (Fig. 26).³² Glossing over the dismal reality of culinary shortages with a vision of plenty and variety, the last image especially

²⁸ During 1946, bacon, poultry and egg rations were reduced, and bread, cake, flour, and oatmeal were rationed for the first time (Humble, *Culinary*, 115).

²⁹ E.g. Ministry of Food, "V. I. P.'s," WW 7 Feb 1948, 167; "A word to expectant Mothers," WW 27 Nov 1948, 650; Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Austerity*, 102. Kenneth Morgan suggests that these fears were unfounded, pointing out that, thanks partly to the establishment of the NHS, Britons' health actually improved under austerity (*Peace*, 79-80).

³⁰ Ministry of Food, "helping out the potatoes," WW 6 Mar 1948, 277.

³¹ Humble, *Culinary*, 115-116.

³² Ministry of Food, "helping out the potatoes," WW 6 Mar 1948, 277; MoF, "food for fresh-air appetites," WW 28 Aug 1948, 261; MoF, "Variety for Breakfast," WW 3 Apr 1948, 389; MoF, "To serve on summer evenings," WW 24 Jul 1948, 111.

endeavours to make the situation seem not so bad, and perhaps encourages readers to anticipate a happy outcome to the government's austerity measures – another romance narrative. Again, cook Cécile supports the Ministry of Food, providing *Woman's Weekly* readers with recipes using mock or substitutable ingredients, or ingredients that can be left out entirely;³³ again, attractive table presentation offers to compensate for their scarcity.³⁴ Cécile's suggestion that a salad made from snoeck, a fish imported from South Africa, would make "A Nice Change For A Summer Day"³⁵ is almost certainly made in direct support of the Ministry, which did its best to promote this tasteless substitute for tuna.³⁶ Cheerfully helping *Woman's Weekly* readers to cope with the privations to which it is subjecting them, Ministry of Food directives, supported by Cécile, present continuing government intervention in their lives as benevolent, commensurate with the concern for their wellbeing expressed by Labour's establishment of National Insurance and the NHS.

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³³ E.g. Cécile, "How To Make Mock Cream," WW 28 Aug 1948, 263. "Dessert For Spring" can be made using semolina instead of sago, if sago is unavailable (C, "Dessert For Spring," WW 3 Apr 1948, 376); her salad cream can be made with or without eggs (C, "For Your Cookery Notebook, WW 19 Jun 1948, 694).

³⁴ E.g. eggless salad cream is photographed in a gleaming silver dish (Cécile, "For Your Cookery Notebook," WW 19 Jun 1948, 694). Two years previously, a 1946 Ministry of Food directive suggests that attractive service will brighten dull meals (Ministry of Food, "Which Foods Do What? – No. 8," WW 1946, 444).

³⁵ Cécile, "Fish Salad For Lunch," WW 10 Jul 1948, 49.

³⁶ Unsuccessfully – snoeck remained universally unpopular until 1949, when the Ministry of Food, admitting defeat, took it off points and quietly forgot about it (Humble, *Culinary*, 116-117). Again with limited success, the post-war Ministry of Food promoted whale meat as a further alternative to fish (ibid., 116): Cécile supports this endeavour too, supplying *Woman's Weekly's* 1947 readers with a "Delicious" recipe for whale steak (Cécile, "A Savoury Casserole," WW 4 Oct 1947, 432).

Fig. 26. A lush salad and decanter of wine evoke abundance in a Ministry of Food directive (Ministry of Food, “To serve on Summer evenings,” WW 24 Jul 1948, 111).

Whilst concern for citizens’ diets continues, other Ministry interventions have lessened since the war – and new ones have been introduced. Although clothes rationing would not be lifted until 1949,³⁷ Ministry of Trade clothing directives are not printed in *Woman’s Weekly* during 1948: perhaps readers are now deemed capable of making-do and mending without official help, the magazine’s dressmaking pages providing sufficient support.³⁸ Introduced post war, new Ministry directives draw readers’ attention to government initiatives besides rationing. The Ministry of Health recommends the diphtheria vaccine,³⁹ and the Ministry of Transport recommends “Kerb Drill” (safe road crossing for children);⁴⁰ the former almost certainly relates to the establishment of the NHS, which, after coming into being at the start of July 1948, pushed immunisation,⁴¹ and the latter to a long-running government campaign to make Britain’s roads safer, which had intensified during the early 1930s following the growth of middle-class car ownership.⁴² Like those issued by the Ministry of Food, these directives reflect a benevolent government concerned with citizens’ wellbeing; partly a hangover from the war, when the government intervened in virtually

³⁷ Mark Roodhouse, *Black Market Britain: 1939-1955* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 48.

³⁸ E.g. hand finishing replaces lace trimming on underwear (“Two Dainty Finishes For Your Pretties,” WW 24 Jan 1948, 86); dress renovation, “Altered Then Dyed,” WW 17 Jul 1948, 62.

³⁹ Ministry of Health, “How Old Is Your Baby?” WW 7 Aug 1948, iii.

⁴⁰ Ministry of Transport, “Don’t throw that plan away,” WW 31 Jul 1948, iii.

⁴¹ Andrew Cliff and Matthew Smallman-Raynor, *Atlas of Epidemic Britain: A Twentieth Century Picture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 101-102.

⁴² Joe Moran, “Crossing the Road in Britain, 1931-1976,” *The Historical Journal* Volume 49, Number 2 (2006): 478-479.

every aspect of daily life, their presence in the magazine reflects Labour's socialist values.

Echoing their wartime predecessors, Ministry of Food directives encourage *Woman's Weekly's* 1948 readers to view making-do with shortages and rationing as national service. Their patriotic message is reinforced by a series of government-issued Reports to the Women of Britain, which, acknowledging readers' domestic outlook and limited education, explain austerity economics, and its role in aiding the country's recovery, using domestic models. National debt is likened to a family spending more than it earns,⁴³ and the import/export market to children swapping toys;⁴⁴ the means of increasing manufacturing output is presented as a recipe, and efficient, cost-effective industrial productivity as a home dressmaking project.⁴⁵ Housewives' knack of making ends meet is vital to Britain's post-war economic recovery, the Reports suggest, reiterating wartime Ministry directives by exhorting readers to save electricity,⁴⁶ buy only essential commodities,⁴⁷ and recycle household waste.⁴⁸ "By scraping and contriving [...] women provide the driving force of the nation's effort"⁴⁹ – as Geoffrey Field notes, austerity "placed a premium on [housewives'] capacity as

⁴³ Report to the Women of Britain No. 2: "Without women's help – Ends won't meet," WW 17 Jan 1948, 79.

⁴⁴ "something I've got and you want for something you've got and I want" (Report to the Women of Britain No. 16: "Are your children 'Swappers?'" WW 11 Sept 1948, 321).

⁴⁵ Report to the Women of Britain No. 18: "Recipe for putting things right," WW 16 Oct 1948, 471.

⁴⁶ Report No. 2: "Without women's help – Ends won't meet," WW 17 Jan 1948, 79.

⁴⁷ Report to the Women of Britain No. 4: "Feathers in our caps," WW 14 Feb 1948, 191.

⁴⁸ Report to the Women of Britain No. 12: "The Woman who wouldn't," WW 10 Jul 1948, 51.

⁴⁹ Report to the Women of Britain No. 2: "Without women's help – Ends won't meet," WW 17 Jan 1948, 79.

domestic managers”.⁵⁰ Echoing those produced during the war, post-war government directives conflate the nation with the home, and designate *Woman’s Weekly* readers as ‘domestic managers’ of both. Just as young men continued being called up for national service after the war, so did housewives.

Cécile’s cheerful input, Ministry directives, and Reports to the Women of Britain create the impression that *Woman’s Weekly* backs austerity; publishing them, the magazine expresses oblique support for Labour. Their presence may, however, also reflect official concerns that the magazine’s readers are rebelling: printed alongside instructions for coping with food rationing and adverts apologising for the continued unavailability of domestic commodities, their elucidations of Keynesian economic theory and its role in Britain’s post-war recovery come across as attempts to justify austerity, a contingency evidently deemed unnecessary during the war, when directives explaining the need for domestic privations did not appear in the magazine. “Good Work! Let’s keep it up [...] So much depends on our efforts now”⁵¹ and “we’ll do it [...] Let’s all help”⁵² – reminders that their country’s economic future is at stake – make housewives’ personal frustrations with rationing seem comparatively petty and appeal to their sense of collective responsibility, aligning patriotism with Labour’s socialist ideals. One Report even uses readers’ sense of collective responsibility to unite them implicitly against the Conservative opposition, pitting one selfish individual, The Woman who wouldn’t, against the selfless

⁵⁰ Field, *Blood*, 376.

⁵¹ Report to the Women of Britain No. 4: “Feathers in our caps,” WW 14 Feb 1948, 191.

⁵² Report to the Women of Britain No. 6: “All eyes on the Dollar,” WW 13 Mar 1948, 303.

masses in a series of limericks that criticise a profligate housewife before thanking “the millions” of “[y]ou” for

Not selfishly spending,
But saving and mending,
And working to see Britain through (Fig. 27).⁵³

Presumably deliberately, *The Woman who wouldn't* recalls H. M. Bateman's “The Man Who” cartoons, popular between the wars, and places its protagonist in a similar social position to the latter: that of a lone individual committing an apparently catastrophic *faux pas* before hordes of horrified onlookers.⁵⁴ But whereas Bateman's cartoons tend to be sympathetic towards The hapless Man Who, presenting him as a victim of snobbery and prejudice, *The Woman who wouldn't* is portrayed as selfish, undermining the masses' collective efforts to economise for Britain. Placing the collective “millions” on the moral high ground, this Report makes a virtue of Labour's socialist agenda, whilst the actions of its wasteful villainess, who acts purely in her own interests, denigrate Conservative opposition calls for a return to free market economics.⁵⁵ In encouraging *Woman's Weekly* readers to perform their post-war national service, the Reports to the Women of Britain also seem to be encouraging them, albeit implicitly, to support Labour. In appearing to aid the government's austerity programme, *Woman's Weekly* loses its previously apolitical stance.

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⁵³ Report to the Women of Britain No. 12: “The Woman who wouldn't,” *WW* 10 Jul 1948, 51.

⁵⁴ E.g. H. M. Bateman “The Guest Who Called The Foie Gras Potted Meat,” in *The Man Who Was H. M. Bateman*, ed. Anthony Anderson (Exeter: Webb & Bower [publishers], 1982), 161.

⁵⁵ Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Austerity*, 4.

Fig. 27. “The Woman who wouldn’t” (Report to the Women of Britain No. 12: “The Woman who wouldn’t,” *WW* 10 Jul 1948, 51).

Encouraging *Woman’s Weekly* readers to express support for Labour through their approach to domestic management, the Reports to the Women of Britain participate in a politicisation of housewifery that took place during the immediate post-war years. Between 1945 and 1947, housewives had expressed their frustration with continued rationing at demonstrations coordinated by the British Housewives’ League – an organisation, established shortly before the 1945 election, that represented housewives disgruntled by long queues for what, some felt, were unfairly distributed supplies.⁵⁶ Campaigning against the Ministry of Food’s proposed withdrawal of dried eggs and decision to ration bread, which had not been rationed during the war, the League differed from organisations such as Women’s Institutes and Townswomen’s Guilds, which sought to protect housewives’ interests through “constructive engagement” with, rather than opposition to, policy makers.⁵⁷ The extent to which the League’s opposition to post-war rationing was politically motivated is debatable, however. Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska and Kenneth Morgan believe that the organisation acted in support of the Conservatives;⁵⁸ James Hinton, however, argues that it was essentially bipartisan, pointing out that members claimed to be uninterested in party politics, that its first protests took place before Labour came to power, and

⁵⁶ James Hinton, “Militant Housewives: the British Housewives’ League and the Attlee Government,” *History Workshop Journal* Volume 38, Issue 1 (1994): 132.

⁵⁷ Hinton, “Militant,” 134, 131.

⁵⁸ Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Austerity*, 3-4; Morgan, *Peace*, 72; see also Jackson, who suggests that the British Housewives’ League – “infiltrated by Conservative Party activists” – became “a Conservative ‘front’” publication that “achieved some limited success in modifying Labour Government decisions on the food front” (Alan Jackson, *The Middle Classes 1900-1950* [Melksham: Redwood Press Ltd, 1991], 331).

that anyhow, the Conservative party, aware that national debt precluded Britain's immediate return to free market economics, supported austerity in parliament.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, Hinton acknowledges, the group articulated deeply held dissatisfaction with austerity, and Labour lost popularity amongst housewives following ration cuts in 1946.⁶⁰ Perhaps, therefore, the threat of explicit partisanship underpins *Woman's Weekly's* non-engagement with the British Housewives' League during 1946 and 1947, when the organisation was at its most active⁶¹ – although Ministry of Food directives and advertisements in the magazine testify to the worsening of rationing during those years, the magazine does not engage explicitly with the League's activities in editorials, or print letters from readers expressing support or otherwise.⁶² Indeed, a 1947 Talk by The Man Who Sees asks readers to view the issue of austerity non-politically, stressing that the task of enabling Britain's economic recovery, by accepting continued domestic privations, "is not primarily the government's affair; it is our affair, yours and mine".⁶³ But whilst ostensibly this Talk emphasises *Woman's Weekly's* apolitical stance, perhaps reassuring readers that, although it continues to print Ministry directives, it remains bipartisan, The Man Who Sees' attempt to

⁵⁹ Hinton, "Militant," 134, 133, 131.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 137.

⁶¹ Ibid., 150.

⁶² Bread rationing was introduced in July 1946, and *Woman's Weekly* responds with recipes, recruitment adverts, and Ministry of Food directives. In April of that year, Cécile published a recipe for "Home-made Rolls" – it seems possible that she was preparing readers ("Cécile's Cookery Class," WW 13 Apr 1946, 405). A second bread-making recipe page, printed in August, must certainly have been prompted by bread rationing (Cécile, "Freshly Baked!" WW 10 Aug 1946, 159). Printed in June and July, two Women's Land Army recruitment adverts cited bad harvests and potential shortages of bread as reasons to join up ("Help to win the Battle for Bread," WW 22 Jun 1946, 697; "Women: There's a two year job to be done...", WW 20 Jul 1946, 79). Ministry of Food directive "Which Foods Do What? – No. 6" reassured readers who worried that they were not eating sufficient carbohydrates (WW 24 Aug 1946, 219).

⁶³ The Man Who Sees, "For England," WW 26 Apr 1947, 445.

distance austerity from party politics could equally be interpreted as an attempt to deflect criticism from the government that introduced the policy. Again, *Woman's Weekly* seems to express support for Labour; owing to its incomplete archive, we can now only speculate whether this apparent support is tactical (the magazine seeking a commercial advantage) or ideological, or a mixture of the two.

Comparative publication *Good Housekeeping* is, however, demonstrably less supportive of austerity. Like *Woman's Weekly*, the magazine prints Ministry of Food directives and Reports to the Women of Britain;⁶⁴ like *Woman's Weekly*, it supports the former with upbeat cookery features.⁶⁵ Unlike *Woman's Weekly* however, *Good Housekeeping* expresses open dissatisfaction with government policy, using editorial material to distance itself from material published on Ministers' behalf. "When, oh when, shall we see more darning wool in the shops?" wails reader A. D. Langen;⁶⁶ finance article "Inflation, Deflation and You" blames the government for inflation, which is decreasing the value of savings, and consequently the value of some middle-class ("the saving classes") incomes;⁶⁷ "Who wants to Emigrate?" discusses opportunities available to those seeking to escape Britain entirely.⁶⁸ An article asking, "Are we losing our sense

⁶⁴ E.g. Report to the Women of Britain No. 2: "Without women's help – Ends won't meet," *GH* Jan 1948, 77; Report to the Women of Britain No. 6: "All eyes on the Dollar," *GH* Mar 1948, 94.

⁶⁵ "Even if fuel cuts reduce you to a picnic oil-stove, these suggestions can save the day!" (Gertrude Tullis, "1-burner cookery," *GH* Jan 1948, 33).

⁶⁶ "Parents Writing," *GH* Mar 1948, 31.

⁶⁷ George L. Schwartz, "Inflation, Deflation and You," *GH* Nov 1948, 14-15, 58-60.

⁶⁸ G. W. L. Day, "Who Wants to Emigrate?" *GH* Mar 1948, 11, 72-74, 76-78, 81. Emigration to British colonies or former colonies, away from a Labour-governed society feared to be growing increasingly communist, seemed attractive to some middle-class individuals during the post-war years (Kynaston, *Austerity*, 260-261). Their urge seems to have been particularly strong during 1948, when 42 per cent of participants in a

of values?” swipes at Labour’s socialist policies by arguing that state regulation of industry and welfare is negating the need for individuals to take personal responsibility for their actions, and by urging readers to maintain their personal integrity for the sake of social morality.⁶⁹ Although ostensibly taking the government’s part by chiding those who, like *The Woman who wouldn’t*, circumnavigate state regulation of consumption by purchasing goods on the black market, the article suggests that their urge to break the law is produced by regulation itself, which curtails individual freedom. Moreover, “Are we losing our sense of values?” aligns itself implicitly with Conservative policy: incorporating an affectionate portrait of Maria Edgeworth’s hardworking, benevolent capitalist Mr Gresham, it expresses nostalgia for “an age which respected private enterprise”, articulating, in doing so, a preference for the free market system of economics championed by the opposition party.⁷⁰ Despite expressing support for Labour’s austerity measures by disseminating Ministry of Food directives and Reports to the Women of Britain, *Good Housekeeping* encourages readers to protest them, distancing itself from government policy with a directness absent from *Woman’s Weekly*, which does not discuss government policy in editorials during 1948.

These differences in party political attitude indicate that the readers targeted by *Woman’s Weekly* and *Good Housekeeping* remain, respectively, middle middle class and not yet middle class during 1948. As previous chapters have suggested, *Good Housekeeping* readers’ keenness to appear well-informed

Gallup poll said that they wanted to emigrate, compared to 19 per cent immediately after the war had ended (ibid., 249).

⁶⁹ Marjorie Tait, “Are we losing our sense of values?” *GH* Oct 1948, 5, 54-56.

⁷⁰ Tait, “Are we losing,” 5.

about current affairs suggests that they are better educated than readers of *Woman's Weekly*; by using editorial material to counter the support for the government it expresses by publishing Ministry directives and Reports, *Good Housekeeping* offers its readers a further opportunity to broaden their minds through political debate, a strategy not employed by *Woman's Weekly*, which, whilst acknowledging that readers may be unhappy with continuing shortages, does not question austerity so openly. One possible explanation for this apparent difference in attitude is that the magazines represent two sides of a class divide in citizens' experiences of life in post-war Britain. To begin with, *Good Housekeeping's* resentment seems symptomatic of the disillusion and embitterment felt by the middle classes under Labour.⁷¹ Wartime privations had caused their living standards to drop, and now their incomes were being stretched by higher taxes and National Insurance, introduced to help fund the new Welfare State: salary earners found themselves 20 per cent worse off than they had been during 1938, and many feared losing status.⁷² Doctors worried that the NHS would regulate their profession unnecessarily, town planning threatened to mix middle-class and working-class communities, and state restrictions on restaurant meals, petrol, and foreign travel curtailed middle-class leisure activities;⁷³ articulating middle-class concerns about an increasingly pervasive socialist bureaucracy,⁷⁴ "Are we losing our values?" complains that "'They' dock our petrol, our holidays and our favourite foods, 'They' tax our income, our cigarettes, our glass of wine at dinner".⁷⁵ The article's context makes it safe to

⁷¹ Jackson, *Middle Classes*, 332.

⁷² Nicola Humble, *The Feminine Middlebrow Novel, 1920s to 1950s: Class, Domesticity, and Bohemianism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 73-74.

⁷³ Jackson, *Middle Classes*, 331.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 330.

⁷⁵ Tait, "Are we losing," 56.

assume that “our” refers to the middle classes, lamenting what seems like an Orwellian level of government interference in their daily lives. The working classes’ prospects were, however, improving under Labour. Manual workers benefitted from the full employment brought by increased industrial productivity,⁷⁶ and wages rose 21 per cent between 1938 and 1949;⁷⁷ thanks to the NHS, the health of individuals from lower economic demographics improved.⁷⁸ The absence of material openly criticising austerity and Labour from *Woman’s Weekly*, although doubtless due in part to the magazine’s continued reluctance to engage with potentially divisive governmental politics, may, therefore, constitute implicit acknowledgement that some of its target readers belong to the working classes that benefitted most under Labour during the immediate post-war years. That *Woman’s Weekly* readers do not, however, consider themselves working class is suggested by the magazine’s responses to middle-class status anxieties exacerbated by Labour’s policies. These are examined in the following two sections.

Hands and hoovers

Amidst post-war shifts within middle- and working-class economic status, lifestyles, and prospects, material distinctions separating the middle from the working classes continued their interwar deterioration.⁷⁹ By the 1940s, servant-keeping – or, as comparisons between *Woman’s Weekly* and *Good Housekeeping* in previous chapters have suggested, the *pretence* of servant-keeping – had

⁷⁶ Morgan, *Peace*, 79.

⁷⁷ Kynaston, *Austerity*, 173.

⁷⁸ Morgan, *Peace*, 79-80.

⁷⁹ Jackson, *Middle Classes*, 332.

ceased to be a touchstone of middle-class identity, owing to the now virtual absence of individuals prepared to become servants in middle-class homes.⁸⁰

Alan Jackson argues that the post-war decline in servant-keeping led “advertising and literature of home-making [...] to assume a more classless character”⁸¹ – further comparison between *Woman’s Weekly* and *Good Housekeeping* suggests, however, that approaches to housework by domestic magazines did remain class specific. Whilst it is certainly the case that readers of both publications are now openly presumed to be running their homes without paid domestic help, their differing incomes oblige them to adopt differing attitudes towards their chores. These are the focus of this section, which opens by re-examining *Woman’s Weekly* readers’ hands.

Looking back briefly, Chapter Two of this thesis deployed advertisements for hand creams and nail polishes as a barometer for gauging *Woman’s Weekly*’s attitudes towards housework and servant-keeping during the mid-interwar period. Hand cosmetics adverts printed in the magazine during 1928, I argued, claimed to help readers keep up appearances of belonging to the servant-keeping middle classes by disguising the physical effects of rough housework; these adverts also helped readers to distinguish themselves from working-class women employed as servants, an anxiety distinctive of their own lower-middle-class status. Twenty years later, adverts for hand cosmetics indicate that the publication’s attitudes towards housework and servant-keeping have shifted, for they have stopped suggesting that their products will conceal their users’ servantless – or servant – status. *Woman’s Weekly* readers’ letters to

⁸⁰ Ibid., 13.

⁸¹ Ibid., 326.

The Beauty Expert suggest that alleviating ‘housework hands’ remains a concern, Housewife asking how to remove vegetable stains and the smell of onions from her “otherwise well-kept hands”,⁸² and newlywed Unlucky Jill lamenting that she “never would have believed [her] hands could have got so rough and red” after six months of fulltime housewifery;⁸³ a home-manicure article testifies to the continuing attraction of “[w]ell-kept hands” to readers, stating that they “lend poise, grace and self-confidence to a woman”.⁸⁴ Adverts for hand-care products do not, however, associate these desirable physical and social attributes with leisured housewifery – neither Zam-Buk, which heals “rough and unsightly” hands that are “in and out of water many times a day”,⁸⁵ nor Glymiel Jelly, which makes “work-roughened hands [...] lovely, smooth and white”,⁸⁶ connects beautiful hands with employing servants. Furthermore, an advert for L’Onglex nail polish even suggests that rough housework is integral to beauty, reinforcing its verbal promise of “practical smartness” with a drawing of manicured hands washing dishes (Fig. 28).⁸⁷ Openly admitting that readers are doing their own chores, these adverts imply that, by 1948, the shame of being middle class and servantless has lessened considerably since the mid-interwar period. Relative to their 1928 predecessors, they indicate that post-war literatures of homemaking are indeed becoming classless, as Jackson suggests.

⁸² Beauty Expert, “The Impression You Give,” WW 14 Feb 1948, 170.

⁸³ Beauty Expert, “Pretty Hands,” WW 24 Jul 1948, 96. The Beauty Expert recommends rubber gloves and a dish mop to minimise contact with water – the first reference to rubber gloves I have found in *Woman’s Weekly*. Rubber gloves receive fuller consideration in Chapter Six of this thesis.

⁸⁴ Beauty Expert, “Be Proud Of Your Hands,” WW 1 May 1948, 478.

⁸⁵ Advert, “Zam-Buk” antiseptic ointment, WW 6 Mar 1948, bc.

⁸⁶ Advert, “Glymiel Jelly” hand cream, WW 2 Oct 1948, bc.

⁸⁷ Advert, “L’Onglex” nail polish, WW 6 Mar 1948, 276.

IMAGE DELETED

Fig. 28. “Practical smartness” with L’Onglex nail polish (Advert, “L’Onglex” nail polish, in *WW* 6 Mar 1948, 276).

Jackson’s contention is undermined, however, when *Woman’s Weekly’s* hand-care discourses are read alongside housework discourses in *Good Housekeeping*. The acceptability of servantless housewifery in middle-class circles seems to be confirmed by service articles in this magazine, which, exposing a shift away from its pre-war middle-middle-class domestic values, address its readers as hands-on housewives without ‘assuming’ that they are doing housework only in their servants’ temporary absence. These articles, and *Good Housekeeping’s* own advertising pages, however, indicate that, whereas the pressure on its readers to be seen to be employing domestic help may have lifted, servants have been replaced by a new middle-class status symbol: domestic appliances. As an advert apologising for the current scarcity of Esse cookers suggests, full peacetime availability of appliances has, like the availability of foodstuffs and clothing, yet to be restored;⁸⁸ nevertheless, eighteen adverts for domestic appliances are printed in the October, November, and December 1948 issues of *Good Housekeeping* (one every 18.5 pages), alongside service articles encouraging readers to deploy cutting-edge technology in their household tasks.⁸⁹ As during 1928, assumed ability to afford labour savers is a means of drawing status distinctions between magazine readerships: during the

⁸⁸ “Only one Esse in four can go for home use; the rest must earn dollars. That is why Esse cookers are so scarce” (advert, “Esse” cookers, *GH* Jul 1948, 81).

⁸⁹ E.g. vacuum cleaner (“Through our Shop Window,” *GH* Apr 1948, 88); casserole steamer (Phyllis L. Garbutt, “Gadgets in the kitchen,” *GH* Jul 1948, 42-43).

same three months, only ten domestic appliance adverts appear in *Woman's Weekly* (one every 30 pages), and none at all in *My Weekly*, a clear indicator that these publications still draw their readers from lower economic demographics than that targeted by *Good Housekeeping*. That *Woman's Weekly* assumes its 1948 readership capable of affording vacuum cleaners, washing machines, and gas cookers suggests that their financial circumstances have improved since the interwar years, when, unlike *Good Housekeeping*, the magazine did not advertise these domestic appliances at all – there is, however, a considerable price difference between the appliances advertised in *Woman's Weekly* and those advertised in *Good Housekeeping*. Not all adverts supply the cost of their products, but of those that do, the most expensive in the former is a Hoover washing machine costing £25 plus purchase tax,⁹⁰ and the most expensive in the latter, a Camley refrigerator for £98 14s 0d.⁹¹ In all probability the Camley, which appears in *Good Housekeeping* only once during the three-month period surveyed, furnishes readers' lifestyle fantasies rather than their homes; nevertheless, its inclusion seems to confirm that, although *Woman's Weekly* readers are now assumed able to afford status-defining labour savers, their domestic aspirations remain considerably more modest than those cherished by readers of *Good Housekeeping*. That *My Weekly's* readers appear unable to afford even to dream about purchasing domestic appliances suggests that their aspirations remain lower than those of *Woman's Weekly* readers, a further

⁹⁰ Advert, "Hoover" washing machine, *WW* 30 Oct 1948, 533.

⁹¹ Advert, "Camley" refrigerator, *GH* Oct 1948, 64.

indication that these two titles, although similar in price, target readers from different economic backgrounds.⁹²

There is, however, one further possible reason for the comparative lack of adverts for domestic labour-saving devices in *Woman's Weekly*, and their total absence from *My Weekly*: they may be incompatible with readers' homes.

Margaret Horsfield points out that electrical domestic appliances require houses to be wired for electricity:⁹³ citing a study by Elizabeth Roberts, which showed that some working-class homes remained without electricity until the late 1940s,⁹⁴ she suggests that housewives on low incomes may have lacked the capacity to run washing machines and vacuum cleaners, even if they could have afforded to purchase the devices themselves. The complete absence of adverts for electrical appliances from *My Weekly* suggests that the majority of its readers are believed to belong to this low-income demographic. Electrical domestic appliances are advertised in *Woman's Weekly* during 1948,⁹⁵ but, looking forward a decade to 1958, the presence in the magazine of British Electrical Association advertisements suggests that some may not yet have acquired this source of domestic power; during the immediate post-war years, some may still be unable to run labour savers, even if they can afford to buy them. Vacuum cleaners, Horsfield points out, did not become commonplace in British homes until the early 1960s, and washing machines, not until the early 1970s.⁹⁶ For some of *Woman's Weekly's* 1948 readers, the technologised domestic future may

⁹² In 1948, *My Weekly* costs 2d and *Woman's Weekly* costs 3d. *Good Housekeeping* costs 1s 6d.

⁹³ Margaret Horsfield, *Biting the Dust: The Joys of Housework* (London: Fourth Estate Ltd, 1997), 127.

⁹⁴ Horsfield, *Dust*, 128.

⁹⁵ E.g. advert, "Electrolux" vacuum cleaner, WW 2 Oct 1948, 412; advert, "Halo" electric iron, WW 6 Nov 1948, 562.

⁹⁶ Horsfield, *Dust*, 128.

still be decades away. These lower-middle-class housewives, therefore, must continue to rely on cheap cosmetics to hide the effects of rough housework, in order to persuade their peers that, like middle-middle-class readers of *Good Housekeeping*, they can afford to buy expensive domestic appliances and, unlike working-class *My Weekly* readers, they live in homes that are wired for electricity.

Etiquette

Ideological contradictions in *Woman's Weekly's* cultural class formation continue during 1948. The impression, given by hand cosmetics advertisements, that its readers inhabit a less status-conscious culture than they did before the war is undercut by the magazine's renewed interest in etiquette. Lifestyle columns discuss issues of social self-presentation, and one out of the usually three queries addressed by agony aunt Mrs Marryat each week tends to concern 'correct' social conduct; reflecting the post-war increase in marriage rates, frequent queries about behaviour at weddings indicates that these occasions are a particularly strong source of social anxiety. Clearly, the likelihood that *Woman's Weekly* readers will be classified by their social interactions remains a pressing concern, and features addressing this concern, a selling point for the magazine. Chapter Two explored how *Woman's Weekly's* 1928 etiquette discourses used a mixture of overt and covert advice to help its readers distinguish themselves from working-class women. The following examination of its 1948 wedding conduct advice brings the commercial function of its etiquette discourses under the spotlight, highlighting a possible increase in *Woman's Weekly's* fears about its readers' conduct in doing so.

Features aimed explicitly at improving readers' social conduct appear repeatedly in *Woman's Weekly* throughout 1948.⁹⁷ Superficially, their purpose is benevolent: by acknowledging readers' concerns, they inscribe comforting, validating spaces within which it is safe to discuss them.⁹⁸ "Wouldn't it be a pleasant, reassuring state of mind if we were absolutely certain that our technique of behaviour was right in all circumstances?" sighs one columnist, reassuring readers that they are not alone in worrying about their conduct, and that it is acceptable for them to do so.⁹⁹ But by discussing these concerns, etiquette columns may also exacerbate them, or even produce new ones, trapping readers into cycles of social anxiety that the magazine can exploit for profit. Alexandra Starr summarises this process, arguing that, by persuading their readers that high standards of appearance and conduct are necessary to achieve personal success, and then selling them products apparently required to meet these standards, women's magazines "create – exploit" anxiety.¹⁰⁰ Her analysis recalls Angela McRobbie's discussion of *Jackie*, a magazine targeting teenage girls, during the 1960s. One of *Jackie*'s key functions, McRobbie argues, is to identify and supply solutions to problems that readers may be experiencing, in order to help them succeed in life.¹⁰¹ "First [the reader] does not and cannot measure up to the ideal standard expected of her. Recognising this, she [...] must embark on a course of

⁹⁷ E.g. "Yours Sincerely," WW 7 Feb 1948, 142; The Man Who Sees, "The Art Of Growing Up," WW 5 Jul 1958, 19, 52-53; "The Just Right Manners," WW 28 Aug 1948, 238; "Guest At A Wedding," WW 25 Sept 1948, 358.

⁹⁸ Cristanne Miller, "Who Talks Like A Women's Magazine? Language and Gender in Popular Women's and Men's Magazines," *The Journal of American Culture* Vol. 10, Issue 3 (1987): 7.

⁹⁹ "The Just Right Manners," WW 28 Aug 1948, 238.

¹⁰⁰ Alexandra Starr, "You've got a long way to go, baby," *The Washington Monthly* Oct 1999, 8-12.

¹⁰¹ Angela McRobbie, "*Jackie* Magazine: Romantic Individualism and The Teenage Girl," in *Feminism and Youth Culture: From 'Jackie' to 'Just Seventeen'* by Angela McRobbie (Basingstoke: Macmillan Education Ltd, 1991), 83, 90.

self-improvement” set out by the magazine.¹⁰² The same issues are addressed repeatedly, by articles that return to the same aspects of readers’ looks or behaviour; pointing out that their course of self-improvement is never completed, McRobbie suggests that the formal open-endedness of weekly publication *Jackie* surfaces in the selfhood it constructs for its readers, who continue to buy the magazine that identifies their problems and supplies instructions for correcting them.¹⁰³ Highlighting *Jackie* readers’ endless state of becoming, McRobbie recalls Judith Williamson’s assessment of women’s magazines, which, she argues, continually put off their readers’ transformation into their desired selves in order to secure their long-term loyalty (see Introduction).¹⁰⁴ Returning repeatedly to readers’ behaviour in social situations, *Woman’s Weekly*’s conduct and etiquette features are thus paradigmatic of the magazine’s form more generally. Hooking readers into a never-ending process of self-improvement, they operate in its commercial interests.

A flip through Mrs Marryat’s 1948 agony pages suggests that wedding conduct is a source of particular concern for *Woman’s Weekly* readers during that year. This presumably reflects post-war marriage rates, which increased between 1945 and 1948, having fallen from 1943.¹⁰⁵ That weddings are a source of social anxiety is, perhaps, unsurprising – whatever readers’ role in the ceremony, their conduct will be on display to a potentially large group of people, some of whom they may be meeting for the first time, and who belong to different social circles with potentially differing notions of propriety. Fear of being seen to ‘do the

¹⁰² McRobbie, “*Jackie*,” 121-122.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 123.

¹⁰⁴ Judith Williamson, *Consuming Passions* (London and New York: Marion Boyars, 1988 [1986]), 55-56.

¹⁰⁵ Mark Donnelly, *Britain in the Second World War* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 44.

wrong thing' underpins their queries to Mrs Marryat, which present the process of getting engaged and married, or attending someone else's wedding, as a social obstacle course. "[T]he thought of the wedding reception is making me feel really nervous" writes Jennifer, worrying who to congratulate, and how;¹⁰⁶ G. R. D. asks whether it is the responsibility of the bride or groom's "people" to put an engagement announcement in the newspaper;¹⁰⁷ Gladys worries that she will "be breaking the laws of etiquette" if she asks a married friend to be her chief bridesmaid;¹⁰⁸ B. A.'s soon-to-be-married sister has decided against bridesmaids – to who should she hand her bouquet during the ceremony?¹⁰⁹ By inviting other readers to examine their own behaviour, these queries generate more like them, ensuring that concerns relating to wedding conduct remain, like *Woman's Weekly*, open-ended. Standards are high, they suggest, and readers evidently require the magazine's help if they are to meet them. Moreover, because advice to brides will be followed only a limited number of times, if at all, by any one reader, the desire to behave correctly at weddings is not restricted to one's own ceremony – Mrs Marryat's advice to guests seeks to ensure that *Woman's Weekly* readers remain anxious to continue improving their conduct at weddings indefinitely. Inasmuch as the agony aunt's responses to their letters contribute to an ongoing course of self-improvement, they highlight this general feature of magazine form as discussed by Starr, McRobbie and Williamson.

Wedding conduct-related anxieties addressed by Mrs Marryat during 1948 suggest that during the early post-war years, *Woman's Weekly* readers still

¹⁰⁶ "Mrs Marryat Advises," WW 14 Aug 1948, 208.

¹⁰⁷ "Mrs Marryat Advises," WW 21 Aug 1948, 236.

¹⁰⁸ "Mrs Marryat Advises," WW 21 Aug 1948, 236.

¹⁰⁹ "Mrs Marryat Advises," WW 20 Nov 1948, 628.

consider themselves inhabitants of an acutely status-conscious middle-class society that continues to regard behaviour as a key distinction of rank. Indications that this concern may even have intensified emerge in a wedding etiquette advice column, whose contents and tone point to a strong underlying fear that readers' conduct will fall short of the mark. Responding to, and perpetuating, worries about their behaviour at weddings, "Guest At A Wedding" helps them to negotiate the day without committing and *faux pas*.¹¹⁰ "Have you been invited to rather a grand wedding? And are you feeling just a little uncertain as to your own behaviour as one of the wedding guests?" Addressing its readers in the present tense, focusing their attention on themselves, introducing the possibility that their conduct may be incorrect, and preparing itself to alleviate this concern, the article's opening questions hook them into reading using anxiety-inducing language tricks identified by Cristanne Miller in her linguistic survey of women's magazines.¹¹¹ Reflecting the close attention paid to wedding conduct by Mrs Marryat and her anxious correspondents, "Guest At A Wedding" subjects its readers' behaviour to forensic scrutiny. Instructing them how to word their response to a "formal" invitation, when and to whom they should send their presents, how they should conduct themselves during the ceremony and what to say to the bride's parents afterwards, where they should sit during the wedding breakfast, when to raise their glasses during the toasts and when to laugh during the speeches, when they should leave and how to thank their hostesses, it guides them through virtually every social interaction they will be required to make during the event. In giving this advice, the article's tone differs from that of

¹¹⁰ "Guest At A Wedding," WW 25 Sept 1948, 358.

¹¹¹ Miller, "Who Talks," 2, 4.

Woman's Weekly's more covert interwar etiquette advice columns. As Chapter Two suggested, the latter instructed readers by implication, elevating them through the flattering assumption that they already belonged to the leisure classes rather than by telling them how to behave in order to distance themselves from their humble origins; by contrast, "Guest At A Wedding" assumes its readers largely ignorant of the ceremony, presuming them to be unaware, for instance, that the bride and groom's families usually occupy opposite sides of the church. Its stern reminder that "[a] wedding is a religious ceremony, and a very solemn one at that, and the guest should observe a becoming gravity during the service" betrays its belief that its readers' origins are indeed humble, and that their lowly ignorance may cause them to disgrace themselves in the eyes of their peers; this assumption of superiority, distinct from the equality implied by the more covert conduct advice in interwar issues of the magazine, points to a greater level of concern that their behaviour may be falling short of acceptable standards. Middle-class standards of conduct, this change in tone suggests, may be under greater threat during the aftermath of the Second World War.

In thus deploying wedding etiquette as a means of demarcating and policing behavioural distinctions between its readers and implicitly less knowledgeable working-class women, *Woman's Weekly* may perhaps be seeking to restore pre-war class relations that, it fears, have been distorted. To Paul Long, Labour's victory in the 1945 general election, achieved at the end of a total war effort requiring commitment from every citizen regardless of class, endorsed a "demand for social justice and a more egalitarian, properly democratic world"¹¹²

¹¹² Paul Long, *Only in the Common People: The Aesthetics of Class in Post-War Britain* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008), 3.

– David Kynaston notes, however, that such a demand, although satisfied in part by nationalisation and the establishment of the Welfare State, did not result in a more classless Britain. “Irrespective of government policy, [...] society at large remained riddled by petty snobbery and infinite gradations of class”.¹¹³

Alongside Long’s assessment, Kynaston points to an embittered, embattled middle class, clinging desperately to its distinctiveness amidst status anxieties triggered by the experience of fighting the war and Labour’s subsequent victory, both of which seemed to have afforded the working classes greater prominence than they had before the conflict. Whether or not the post-war working classes, in becoming more prosperous, actually sought to become more middle class is debatable: Joanna Bourke observes that, whilst their increasing wealth coupled with growing consumerism has led to speculation that working-class culture became more bourgeois by the mid-1950s, working-class “ideas about society and social relations” remained distinct from those of the middle classes.¹¹⁴ Inasmuch as it relates to the present argument, however, whether or not the working classes thought they were becoming more middle class is irrelevant – what matters is that the middle classes seem to have felt threatened by increasing working-class prosperity, and in reaction clung to their own distinctions more tightly.

At this stage it is useful to turn to two novels by Marghanita Laski, which, dramatising middle-class status anxieties during the post-war years, give literary context to *Woman’s Weekly*’s implicit concerns about the increasingly wealthy working classes. Published during 1952, *The Village* associates the latter

¹¹³ Kynaston, *Austerity*, 174.

¹¹⁴ Joanna Bourke, *Working-class Cultures in Britain 1890-1960* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 25.

with the growing prosperity of the working classes. Shortly after peace is declared, Major and Mrs Trevor are outraged when their daughter Margaret becomes engaged to Roy Wilson, the son of Mrs Trevor's former domestic help. Earning fifteen pounds a week, Roy represents the working classes that became better off under Labour; the Trevors, whose scant savings are disappearing rapidly into a failing chicken farm, embody the hard-up middle classes. Margaret and Roy's marriage ought to reflect a 'classless' post-war society, in which relations between individuals are no longer determined by background and occupation; the extent to which it achieves this is tempered, however, when, bowing to pressure from Margaret's parents, they agree to move to Australia, where their *mésalliance* can cause the latter no further social embarrassment.¹¹⁵

The war has shaken up social hierarchies, *The Village* suggests, but pre-war class prejudices remain and the middle classes will not concede their position and influence to the up-and-coming working classes without a fight. By teaching its 1948 readers to maintain behavioural distinctions between themselves and the latter, *Woman's Weekly* furthers the embattled middle classes' cause. A 1948 novel by Laski suggests, moreover, that the magazine's production and preservation of class distinctions may reflect a politically Conservative outlook. Set just after peace has been declared, *Tory Heaven or Thunder on the Right* satirises a post-war Conservative utopia in which the classes are separated by precise distinctions: upward or downward mobility is achievable only by court order, and social interactions between individuals belonging to different classes are strictly regulated or disallowed completely. Leaving little room for doubt, the system seems especially popular with the middle classes, who "like to know

¹¹⁵ Marghanita Laski, *The Village* (London: Cresset Press, 1952).

where they are [...] and [...] where other people are, too”¹¹⁶ – explicitly aligned with political Conservatism, the ‘ideal’ post-war society described by *Tory Heaven* suggests that the middle classes’ social confusion may have arisen as a result of Labour’s policies. The middle classes, the novel implies, would prefer a Conservative government: *Woman’s Weekly*’s wedding etiquette discourses may, therefore, represent oblique rebellion against Labour’s socialist principles. Strengthening this assumption, the following section of this chapter will suggest that the magazine’s leisure discourses express oblique rebellion against austerity.

Getting away from it all

Flipping through *Woman’s Weekly* magazines issued during 1948, I am struck by a relative absence of practical housework advice. Cécile continues to share recipes, The London Girl continues to answer dressmaking queries, and The Matron continues to dispense childcare guidance; their columns tend to be short, however, and, aside from occasional one-off pieces of domestic advice,¹¹⁷ the majority of copy space is now occupied by leisure discourses. This shift in emphasis might be interpreted in various ways. Firstly, it could indicate that the level of *Woman’s Weekly* readers’ domestic expertise is assumed to have risen during the interwar years, and that they are now deemed capable of running their homes with less help from the magazine. Having successfully trained them, it is turning its attention to domestic leisure: to the extent that they are becoming better household managers, *Woman’s Weekly* readers are showing signs of

¹¹⁶ Marghanita Laski, *Tory Heaven, or, Thunder on the Right* (London: Cresset Press, 1948), 53.

¹¹⁷ E.g. The London Girl, “Army Blankets Make Good Curtains,” *WW* 14 Feb 1948, 170; Cécile, “Keeping Linens Really White,” *WW* 3 Jul 1948, 18.

personal development across the period under review. This would, however, imply a static readership. The publication's shift towards leisure could also indicate that they are 'assumed' to have acquired more free time, perhaps thanks to domestic appliances – an oblique, flattering indication of class promotion. Within the magazines' immediate socio-economic context, however, their lack of engagement with housework also points to a readership fed up with housekeeping under austerity. Tired of having to make do on limited resources, they read *Woman's Weekly* to escape, as well as to cope with domestic hardship. Once again, therefore, the magazine offers its readers compensation for the difficulties they may be experiencing in the present. During 1948, this compensation offers oblique protest against austerity.

Printed on poor-quality rationed paper alongside government directives urging them to recycle, save fuel, and make do with short food rations, and adverts apologising for continued domestic shortages, *Woman's Weekly's* 1948 leisure discourses reflect an implicit desire amongst readers to 'get away from it all'. Besides the magazine's fiction, its crafting and beauty features and brief film reviews enable them to create space for me-time, time off from making-do and finding ways to eke out the diminished supplies allotted to them by the Ministry of Food. Feminine knitting patterns encourage them to spruce up their wardrobes, perhaps relaxing in a comfy chair while they knit, and instructions for a home manicure, to make time for pampering rough, sore, housework hands.¹¹⁸ "Take This Page With You To The Hairdresser's!" urges a beauty column illustrating hairstyles, on the same page as "This Week's Film" – together, these

¹¹⁸ Beauty Expert, "Be Proud Of Your Hands," WW 1 May 1948, 478.

articles offer readers a pleasant afternoon out of the house.¹¹⁹ Coinciding with a post-war “explosion” in British holidaymaking, triggered by demobilisation and the derequisitioning of hotels, boarding houses, and camps,¹²⁰ holiday features offer *Woman’s Weekly* readers lengthier escape from their daily domestic responsibilities. As during 1928, columnists’ responses to actual readers’ queries indicate that they do not merely supply holiday fantasies for those who cannot afford to travel; encouraged to take “working holidays on farms” in support of Ministry of Agriculture schemes to increase food productivity,¹²¹ and reminded to hand in their food coupons on arrival at guesthouses,¹²² prospective holidaymakers are, however, unable to escape austerity completely. Cheaper, more immediate, and more geographically distant escapism is offered by *Woman’s Weekly* fiction set abroad. Readers can begin life in a new country vicariously through the experiences of Una, who leaves London to become governess and domestic help to a British family in Uganda,¹²³ and watch dawn break over the Iranian desert alongside nurse Allison:

The river was a broad mauve gleam threading through the silence, and above it the palms still had a velvety vagueness about their greenery. The dazzling yellow glare of the desert was yet to come [...] distance seemed a mere step across pleasant mystery to the background of mountains, where the quartz, catching the sun, gleamed as rubies against a sable pall.¹²⁴

¹¹⁹ “The Week’s Film,” *WW* 2 Oct 1948, 390.

¹²⁰ Colin Ward and Dennis Hardy, *Goodnight Campers!: The history of the British holiday camp* (London: Mansell Publishing, 1986), 74.

¹²¹ Holiday Expert, “A Farming Holiday,” *WW* 24 Jul 1948, 109.

¹²² Holiday Expert, “Your Holiday Rations,” *WW* 4 Mar 1948, 254.

¹²³ Marjorie Warby, “Comfortable Home Offered,” serialised in *WW* between 11 September and 27 November 1948.

¹²⁴ Dudley Hoys, “Just Average,” *WW* 2 Oct 1948, 399.

Radiating colour from the precious stones and luxury materials from which it appears to have been fashioned, even this desert landscape seems richer than austerity Britain. Pictured thus at daybreak, this escapist fantasy reflects, perhaps, readers' desire for a fresh beginning in a country of material plenty.¹²⁵

An apparently more practical escape from austerity than romance fiction is offered by *Woman's Weekly's* 1948 fashion and dressmaking discourses, which, showing readers how to participate in Christian Dior's fabulous New Look, ache for the end of clothes rationing. Offering, on the one hand, practical advice for eking out rationed wardrobes, and, on the other, fantasies of participation in expensively luxurious high fashion, these discourses recall Henri Lefebvre's belief that women's magazines are characterised by a sense of ambiguity between the "everyday" and the "imaginary": pointing out that their "practical texts [...] read like dreams" he suggests that, in providing their readers with practical advice for daily life, magazines interpolate them into lifestyles they fantasise about leading.¹²⁶ Accordingly, 'New Look' fashion and dressmaking features in *Woman's Weekly* bring readers into a world unaffected

¹²⁵ Other post-war fiction that offered exotic geographical escapism includes Agatha Christie's *They Came to Baghdad*, set in Iraq (1951), and *Destination Unknown*, set in Morocco (1954). Set respectively in Provence, the French Pyrenees, the French Alps, and Greece, Mary Stewart novels *Madam, Will You Talk?* (1954), *Thunder on the Right* (1957), *Nine Coaches Waiting* (1958) and *My Brother Michael* (1959) also provide fantasies of life outside dreary post-war Britain. Published the year that food rationing ended, *Madam, Will You Talk?* is notable in particular for its French epicurean fantasies. Holidaying in the South of France, heroine Charity consumes regular aperitifs and cups of coffee; her meals, described in mouthwatering detail and with an emphasis on plenty, feature rich and exotic-sounding dishes that contribute to the setting's escapist qualities. "We began with iced melon, which was followed by the famous *brandade truffée*, a delicious concoction of fish cooked with truffles. We could have stopped there, but the next course – some small bird like a quail, simmered in wine and served on a bed of green grapes – would have tempted an anchorite to break his penance. Then *crêpes Suzette*, and, finally, coffee and Armagnac" (Mary Stewart, *Mary Stewart Omnibus I* [London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1969 [1954]], 64).

¹²⁶ Henri Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life Volume II: Foundations for a Sociology of the Everyday*, trans. John Moore (London and New York: Verso, 2002 [1961]), 12-13.

by clothes rationing – in doing so, they express oblique protest against the Labour government's austerity measures.

Sweeping from catwalks to *couturiers'* catalogues and magazine fashion pages, Dior's New Look was unveiled in Paris, in February 1947.¹²⁷ They were an instant hit with consumers: with their cinched-in waists, curving shoulder and bust lines, and long skirts flowing over padding and petticoats, New Look costumes trumped the boxy, functional-looking Utility garments still being produced from tightly rationed fabrics by British manufacturers.¹²⁸ More easily copied than *haute couture*, although the availability and expense of rationed fabric are still issues for home dressmakers during 1948, Dior's models were embraced "remarkably quickly" by British women.¹²⁹ Their distinctive, hourglass silhouette glides through *Woman's Weekly* magazines throughout 1948, implicitly in the clothes worn by romance heroines and the models displaying The London Girl's fashion hints, and more explicitly in instructions for a coat "Renovation Which Includes All The Latest Fashion Details".¹³⁰ The London Girl encourages readers to accessorise in line with "the New Look",¹³¹ and advises Mrs L. of Dagenham to update a suit by replacing its square shoulder pads with "more rounded ones" and by lengthening its skirt (Fig. 29);¹³² slimming exercises for wearing a dress with a "nipped-in waist" sculpt readers' bodies into the new, fashionable shape.¹³³ Glancing through copies of style-Bible

¹²⁷ Pearson Philips, "The New Look," in *Age of Austerity*, ed. Michael Sissons and Philip French (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986 [1963]), 129.

¹²⁸ Philips, "Look," 130, 140.

¹²⁹ Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, "Women under Austerity: Fashion in Britain during the 1940s," in *Gender and Material Culture: Historical Perspectives*, ed. Moira Donald and Linda M. Hurcomb (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), 230.

¹³⁰ "With A New Yoke Of Fur," *WW* 10 Jan 1948, 34.

¹³¹ The London Girl, "Whispers," *WW* 24 Apr 1948, 449.

¹³² The London Girl, "As Smart As To-Day," *WW* 5 Jun 1948, 622.

¹³³ Beauty Expert, "Help Yourself To Beauty," *WW* 31 Jul 1948, 118, 122.

Vogue issued during 1948,¹³⁴ one can easily imagine how desirable Dior's costumes must have seemed to housewives fashioning lingerie out of coupon-free surplus parachute material and silk escape maps.¹³⁵

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Fig. 29. The London Girl advises Mrs L. of Dagenham to replace her "square" shoulder pads with "rounded ones" and patterns in "Our Catalogue Of Summer Dresses" draw on Dior's nipped-in waists and full skirts (The London Girl, "As Smart As To-Day," *WW* 5 Jun 1948, 622; "Our Catalogue Of Summer Dresses," *WW* 5 Jun 1948, 623).

Woman's Weekly's embrace of Dior's New Look constitutes oblique engagement with party and gender politics. Pearson Phillips locates the appeal of Dior's 1947 spring collection to British housewives in the contrast its luxuriousness made with the drabness of their lives under austerity:¹³⁶ they no longer felt the heightened sense of prestige and self-esteem their task of coping with limited consumption had engendered during the war, and amidst continuing shortages and rationing, the optimism of the "VE Day Spirit" had disappeared.¹³⁷ Utility garments' "heavy and sombre" cuts and colours did little to cheer women made to feel "dispirited, cramped and cross" by fuel shortages, queuing, and inflation¹³⁸ – *Woman's Weekly's* enthusiastic adoption of the New Look during 1948 could, therefore, express implicit rebellion against the Labour

¹³⁴ E.g. "The Paris Collections" features Dior jackets and skirts, and a ball gown and evening coat: blue satin edged with gold lace, worn over yards and yards of frothy gathered tulle ("The Paris Collections," *Vogue* Mar 1948, 46-57).

¹³⁵ "Parachute Lingerie," *WW* 10 Jul 1948, 34; "A Graceful Housecoat," *WW* 4 Sept 1948, 274.

¹³⁶ Philips, "Look," 129-148.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 132-133.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 140, 133-134.

government's austerity policies,¹³⁹ which sought deliberately to prevent the trend from entering post-war British fashion. In the spirit of economy, President of the Board of Trade Sir Stafford Cripps had ordered the British Guild of Creative Designers to boycott long hemlines, and in support, Labour Member of Parliament Mabel Ridealgh proclaimed that New Look designs wasted fabric:¹⁴⁰ by encouraging its readers to buy into the New Look therefore, *Woman's Weekly* rebels against government measures to reduce clothing consumption. Since editorial notes have not survived, it is now impossible to determine whether or not this protest is intentional – most likely the magazine is acting in its own commercial interests, seeking to cash in on housewives' desire to inject their tired wardrobes with Dior's glamour. Nonetheless, these interests coincide with the interests of the Conservatives, who targeted housewives in particular with a pro-consumerist agenda. By encouraging its readers to adopt the New Look, *Woman's Weekly* implicitly sides its readers with the government's opposition in a party political debate.¹⁴¹

In gender-political terms, *Woman's Weekly*'s enthusiasm for the New Look is implicitly conservative. Contemporary feminists debated the implications of Dior's flowing, curvaceous designs, some arguing that their corseted silhouettes represented a "plunge back to non-emancipated womanhood" that negated recent feminist gains, and others fearing that their full, long skirts would physically hinder housewives and businesswomen alike.¹⁴² Dior himself equated his designs with an old-fashioned outlook, suggesting that

¹³⁹ Zweiniger-Bargielowska, "Women," 218-237.

¹⁴⁰ Philips, "Look," 141-142; Zweiniger-Bargielowska, "Women," 229.

¹⁴¹ Zweiniger-Bargielowska, "Women," 230.

¹⁴² Philips, "Look," 141, 143-144.

they were infused with the nostalgia he felt for the final years of the *Belle Epoque* in Paris prior to the First World War.¹⁴³ The New Look, therefore, seems contradictory. On the one hand, anticipating the end of rationing and a new era of consumerism, it is associated with the future; on the other, it suggests that women's role in this future will be more conservative than some feminists would hope. Appropriately therefore, *Woman's Weekly's* engagement with debates surrounding women's role in the post-war reconstruction of Britain is the focus of the final section of this chapter, which addresses a resurfacing of discussions about the status of housewives and women working in paid employment outside their homes.

Working wives?

As during the year immediately following the Armistice, a war in which women were required to work in 'masculine' occupations prompts debate in *Woman's Weekly* about its readers' relations to paid employment. Printed about three years after the end of the Second World War, discourses surrounding working readers in *Woman's Weekly* 1948 are not directly comparable to those printed in the post-Armistice magazines discussed in Chapter One; nevertheless, distinctions between them, assessed in social context and with an eye on probable changes within the publication's target demographic, inform its engagement with debates surrounding women's contribution to the rebuilding of post-war Britain. As during the First World War's immediate aftermath, *Woman's Weekly* 1948 debates the status of readers with paid occupations. The prospect of working wives resurfaces in its employment discourses, which, in collaboration with

¹⁴³ Ibid., 131.

idyllic portrayals of domestic life, imply that readers' role in post-war British society should be as conservative as their enthusiasm for Dior garments perhaps suggests.

As during the interwar period, *Woman's Weekly* 1948 addresses a working readership, and assumes that the majority of working readers have clerical occupations. Office workers consult Mrs Marryat,¹⁴⁴ a tagline reminds readers to recycle office paper,¹⁴⁵ and a hairdressing tip is directed at the "businesswoman";¹⁴⁶ strengthening the magazine's assumption that the majority of working readers have clerical jobs, most working romance heroines have jobs in offices.¹⁴⁷ But whilst the type of paid occupation pursued by *Woman's Weekly's* working readers has, therefore, not changed since the interwar years, their visibility in the magazine has decreased dramatically in comparison to magazines published during the immediate aftermath of the First World War, when weekly "Chats On Careers" sought to help them into occupations unlikely to attract returning servicemen (see Chapter One). Equivalent features do not appear during 1948, advice for jobseekers being restricted to infrequent queries addressed to Mrs Marryat,¹⁴⁸ and a handful of adverts for the ATS, the WAAF, and nursing.¹⁴⁹ This change seems to confirm either that *Woman's Weekly's* target readership has matured during the intervening twenty years, or that its interests have narrowed. Rather than deliberately trying to exclude readers with

¹⁴⁴ "Mrs Marryat Advises," WW 31 Jul 1948, 148; WW 28 Aug 1948, 268.

¹⁴⁵ "Salvage Paper In Your Office, Too," WW 4 Sept 1948, 269.

¹⁴⁶ "As Others See Us – " WW 2 Oct 1948, 390.

¹⁴⁷ Eighteen, compared to six nurses, three teachers, an artist, a mannequin, a switchboard operator, and an assistant to a Lady Almoner (complete stories only).

¹⁴⁸ E.g. "Mrs Marryat Advises," WW 24 Jul 1948, 116.

¹⁴⁹ E.g. advert, "ATS," WW 3 Jul 1948, 27; advert, "WAAF," WW 21 Aug 1948, 231; advert, "YOU – in a new world..." WW 20 Nov 1948, 627.

jobs outside the home, the magazine may be strengthening its focus on domesticity in order to reinforce its niche in an increasingly competitive market.

Shifts in *Woman's Weekly's* target demographic and increased competition from other titles do not, however, fully account for the magazine's apparent lessening of interest in its post-war working readers, for significant shifts in its attitude towards working women materialise in its romance fiction. Interwar workplace romances, I have suggested, functioned partly as careers fiction, giving jobseekers a taste of the duties that occupations such as clerical work and nursing might entail. Only one 1948 workplace romance outlines its heroine's professional duties in any detail, however, listing the sorts of documents an agency secretary might be required to type up and the sorts of employers for whom she might work, before depicting a day in her working life;¹⁵⁰ other heroines' occupations are portrayed negatively, a mannequin's duties consisting mainly of receiving disparaging comments about her personal appearance as she loses out to younger, slimmer models,¹⁵¹ and those of a teacher, marking essays over a solitary dinner of "congealed" leftovers.¹⁵² These negative portrayals of women's working lives represent a shift in attitude from that underpinning *Woman's Weekly's* interwar workplace romances, which, depicting happy, competent heroines, encouraged readers to take pride in their own work: heroines' dedication, professionalism, and propensity for teamwork made them attractive to heroes, and narratives implied that they would transfer these admirable qualities to domestic management after marrying. During 1948 however, heroines and heroes are rarely depicted working together, a change in

¹⁵⁰ Margaret Baumann, "Rendez-Vous," WW 3 Jan 1948, 3-5.

¹⁵¹ Beatrice Kane, "Pink Peonies," WW 28 Aug 1948, 239.

¹⁵² Vera Wynn Griffiths, "My Sister," WW 13 Mar 1948, 283.

narrative formula indicating that professional compatibility is perceived to be a less accurate gauge of marital compatibility than previously. Ruth falls in love with co-worker James at her twenty-first birthday party rather than in their office,¹⁵³ and Jenny's relationship with colleague Maurice develops during lunchtime walks in the city and weekend walks in the country.¹⁵⁴ work has become a mundane backdrop, rather than a catalyst, for romance. Even a nurse, whose caring duties make her housewives' placeholder, is denied the opportunity to work in professional partnership with the doctor she will eventually marry: when Daphne and Peter encounter an injured boy during a country walk, Daphne helps her colleague and future husband by taking over the boy's mother's baking while Peter sets his leg.¹⁵⁵ Professional competency, it seems, no longer equals domestic competency, a significant departure from the attitude promoted by "A Mother-In-Law in Favour of the Business Girl as a Wife",¹⁵⁶ who reassured *Woman's Weekly's* 1919 readership that well-organised, efficient clerical workers had excellent domestic skills (see Chapter One). Interwar workplace romances, whilst they concluded with their heroines happily anticipating full-time domesticity, made working before marriage seem, on the whole, enjoyable and fulfilling, and even a means of scouting for prospective husbands – 1948 romances' lack of enthusiasm for professional work make housewifery seem even more appealing by comparison, and husbands are sought as a means of escape. Teacher Anna's longing for "a nice husband who would go out and earn my daily bread for me, and be companionable in the evening"¹⁵⁷ seems to sum up

¹⁵³ Bethea Creese, "Twenty-One," *WW* 22 May 1948, 563-566, 584.

¹⁵⁴ Norah Smaridge, "Humble Pie," *WW* 28 Feb 1948, 227-230, 247.

¹⁵⁵ Beatrice Kane, "Passing Storm," *WW* 30 Oct 1948, 514.

¹⁵⁶ "A Mother-In-Law in Favour of the Business Girl as a Wife," *WW* 20 Nov 1918, 341.

¹⁵⁷ Vera Wynn Griffiths, "My Sister," *WW* 13 Mar 1948, 283.

the aspirations of most working heroines during that year. Their interwar professional zeal by and large extinguished, *Woman's Weekly's* 1948 working heroines – and, by extension, working readers – are simply “treading water before marriage”.¹⁵⁸

Woman's Weekly's lack of engagement with women in paid occupations, and continued assumption that women with jobs are single, are especially remarkable because they do not reflect the experiences of increasing numbers of women. Between December 1947 and June 1951 the number of British women with paid jobs grew by 710,000, a rise attributed by Alva Myrdal and Viola Klein “entirely [...] to the increased proportion of married women going out to work”.¹⁵⁹ Post-war labour shortages and an aging population prompted the Ministry of Labour to encourage wives without dependent children to enter the labour market, policy makers having decided that part-time employment, although not ideal, would not impinge on their domestic responsibilities.¹⁶⁰ Besides helping Britain's economy to recover, working-class wives in particular were motivated to work by the democratisation of culture and generally rising incomes, which were bringing material aspirations within their reach.¹⁶¹ A desire to preserve class distinctions may, therefore, account in part for *Woman's Weekly's* attitude towards working women during 1948: if the bulk of its readers are indeed housewives, then its negativity could reflect a desire to discourage them from returning to work by reminding them how little they enjoyed their

¹⁵⁸ Ian Haywood and Deborah Philips, *Brave New Causes: Women in British Postwar Fictions* (London: Leicester University Press, 1998), 14.

¹⁵⁹ Alva Myrdal and Viola Klein, *Women's Two Roles: Home and Work* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1968 [1956]), 79-80.

¹⁶⁰ Jane E. Lewis, *Women in Britain since 1945: Women, Family, Work and the State in the Post-War Years* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 71-72.

¹⁶¹ Myrdal and Klein, *Roles*, 85.

jobs before they married. Strengthening the association between working wives and the working classes, a Report to the Women of Britain applauds one Mrs Edith Jackson for combining shifts at two different mills;¹⁶² editorial material does not reinforce its message however, and the only fictional representation of a working wife is overwhelmingly negative, an actress who continues working after getting married and then dies in childbirth. Alone, working wives' absence from *Woman's Weekly* might indicate a desire on the part of the magazine to distance itself and its readers from women who work to supplement their husbands' incomes. Combined with this cautionary tale however, and negative portrayals of jobs performed by single women, this absence signals active resistance to the notion of married women taking on paid employment. Once again, *Woman's Weekly* is debating women's economic status during the aftermath of a war in which many were required to work outside their homes, and once again it suggests that, if married, their husbands should support them. At a time when it is becoming increasingly acceptable for married women to work, the magazine's largely romantic insistence that they do not comes across as a deliberate ploy to distance itself from more liberal social attitudes and, again, constitutes implied rebellion against government policy.

Woman's Weekly's gender-conservatism receives oblique justification in a Talk by The Man Who Sees, who worries that women who combine marriage with paid work outside the home risk being bad wives and mothers, and could, as a consequence, destroy the foundations of society.¹⁶³ His sentiments reflect a more widespread concern in early post-war Britain, where it was feared that the

¹⁶² Report to the Women of Britain, No. 6: "All eyes on the Dollar," WW 13 Mar 1948, 303.

¹⁶³ The Man Who Sees, "The Half-Time Wife," WW 6 Nov 1948, 544, 560.

nuclear family, the “bedrock” of British society, had been damaged by the recent conflict.¹⁶⁴ During the immediate post-war years, therefore, social reconstruction focused heavily on rebuilding family life, thought to have been “disrupted” by evacuation and bombing; following investigations into the effects on children of being separated from or losing their parents, fulltime motherhood was deemed crucial to the re-establishment of family stability, and, amidst fears surrounding falling birth rates and juvenile delinquency, married women were strongly encouraged to devote themselves to having and bringing up children.¹⁶⁵ Fathers, it was argued, were responsible for their families’ financial provision: working mothers deprived their children of maternal guidance, key to their development into responsible citizens.¹⁶⁶ In warning married readers against attempting to combine professional work with their domestic duties during 1948, *The Man Who Sees* subscribes to these conservative beliefs, expressed more implicitly by *Woman’s Weekly*’s negative employment discourses. The notion that wives should provide family stability and produce the next generation of good citizens resonates strongly with the magazine’s pre-war and wartime conviction that its readers should be responsible for social morality: by embracing fulltime domesticity, married readers can put these beliefs into practice, fulfilling the ‘promise’ they made to society by retaining their domestic outlook as they performed ‘masculine’ national service during the war.

In selling this culture of domestic reconstruction to its readers, *Woman’s Weekly* juxtaposes negative depictions of paid work with positive images of housewifery. “[H]owever competent and clever a woman may become in other

¹⁶⁴ Lewis, *Women*, 12.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 16-18.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 18-19.

directions, her crowning glory is that she should become a home-maker” declares The Man Who Sees, explaining that domestic work, not professional, will lead readers to personal fulfilment.¹⁶⁷ Once again, drawings illustrating the magazine’s advice columns create a blissful impression of domestic life. Cécile’s housewives smile contentedly as they prepare food in light, spacious kitchens, their hair beautifully set, their pretty dresses immaculate, their frilly aprons spotless;¹⁶⁸ one housewife does her shopping wearing a trim little hat with matching coat,¹⁶⁹ another wears a fetching dress to write letters,¹⁷⁰ and a third, reminding readers that domestic life involves leisure as well as labour, applies make-up at a large dressing table beside an extravagant-looking drape.¹⁷¹ Cheerful babies and well-behaved toddlers on The Matron’s Corner make motherhood seem pleasurable,¹⁷² and pro-motherhood stories deploy sentiment, nursery teacher Daphne contemplating “cheeks soft as peach skin” and “tiny pliant hands with curling fingers” as she reads to her young charges,¹⁷³ and childless Janie feeling “chained by the soft pull of [orphan Roddy’s] tiny hands”¹⁷⁴ – whilst not all readers are of child-bearing age, all are encouraged to participate in a pro-natalist culture (Fig. 30).

IMAGES DELETED

¹⁶⁷ The Man Who Sees, “The Half-Time Wife,” WW 6 Nov 1948, 560.

¹⁶⁸ E.g. Cécile, “Little Puddings Served Hot,” WW 24 Jan 1948, 106; C, “Little Golden Puddings,” WW 7 Feb 1948, 159.

¹⁶⁹ Cécile, “A Good Method Of Making Stock,” WW 31 Jan 1948, 124.

¹⁷⁰ “Yours Sincerely,” WW 7 Feb 1948, 142.

¹⁷¹ Beauty Expert, “The Impression You Give,” WW 14 Feb 1948, 170.

¹⁷² E.g. The Matron, “Especially For Baby!” WW 31 Jan 1948, 134; TM, “Colours For Susan,” WW 7 Aug 1948, 170.

¹⁷³ Beatrice Kane, “Quiet Haven,” WW 14 Aug 1948, 186.

¹⁷⁴ Lilian Chisholm, “Sister To Paul,” WW 20 Mar 1948, 312.

Fig. 30. A pleasant kitchen and a happy baby make housewifery seem appealing (Cécile, “Little Puddings – Served Hot,” WW 24 Jan 1948, 106; The Matron, “Especially For Baby!” WW 31 Jan 1948, 134).

Woman's Weekly magazines published during 1948 contain no explicit signs that readers are unwilling to perform their domestic role in rebuilding Britain. Mrs Marryat does not print letters from correspondents expressing dissatisfaction with fulltime housewifery, or arguing that they should be able to combine housework with jobs outside their homes, for instance. The impression that the magazine's negative portrayals of paid work and positive portrayals of domesticity may perhaps have been published with a view to persuading the reluctant to embrace domesticity is given by two romances that recognise that fulltime housewifery may be difficult, but suggest that wives have no alternative. In the first of these, Mary's story is set after the fairy-tale ending of medical romances: now married to doctor John, the former nurse finds herself rushed off her feet by acting as his administrator as well as his housekeeper.¹⁷⁵ After a day spent doing housework, answering the telephone, fielding difficult patients, making up prescriptions, and preparing meals that her busy husband has no time to eat, she warns a friend and former colleague, newly engaged to a doctor, that being a doctor's wife is hard, unrewarding work – “[a]re you even-tempered, tactful, and discrete? Are you a natural-born telephone addict? Are you capable of scrubbing floors [...]?”¹⁷⁶ In another story, Suzy feels equally disillusioned with fulltime housewifery, struggling to perform chores performed by her mother before she married. “[T]here was no achievement. The bed never had the neat smoothness of mother's beds. Dust seemed to accumulate in her wake [...] and

¹⁷⁵ Jane Hampton, “Doctor's Wife,” WW 3 Jul 1948, 10-12.

¹⁷⁶ Hampton, “Doctor's Wife,” 12.

her experiments in cookery were too often disastrous".¹⁷⁷ Invited to identify with Mary and Suzy's lack of fulfilment and sense of inadequacy, *Woman's Weekly* readers experiencing similar difficulties receive a comforting, reassuring sense that their own frustrations are both acknowledged and validated. Suzy even 'admits' that the magazine may be culpable, by suggesting that the joyous vision of married domesticity anticipated by romance stories may conflict with domestic life in the real world. "The 'happily ever after' business of the story books was all nonsense",¹⁷⁸ she complains, contrasting her 'lived experience' of housework with that promised by magazine fiction, and inviting readers who identify with her to do likewise. Her complaint, however, strengthens the ideological persuasiveness of her own narrative. By inviting readers to view the message transmitted by the endings of other magazine stories sceptically, she implies that the ending of her own, which acknowledges that fulltime housewifery can involve drudgery, will offer a more realistic solution. This solution is perhaps bleak, for Suzy learns that, whilst housework can be arduous and unrewarding, she has no alternative, and must, therefore, consider it a labour of love. "All the humdrum things which made up the routine of daily life were [...] bright with interest because she did them for George, who was her husband".¹⁷⁹ Mary, likewise, learns that supporting her husband makes domestic labour worthwhile: by promptly passing on a telephone message, it transpires, she saved a patient's life. Identifying with Suzy and Mary, *Woman's Weekly* readers are encouraged to apply their solutions to their own frustrations; in the context of these endings, the magazine's positive portrayals of fulltime

¹⁷⁷ Vera Wynn Griffiths, "After The Honeymoon," *WW* 18 Sept 1948, 355.

¹⁷⁸ Griffiths, "After The Honeymoon," 348.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 355.

housewifery constitute attempts to persuade readers that their own domestic labours are equally enjoyable and fulfilling. Combining housework with paid work outside the home is not, it seems, a valid lifestyle for *Woman's Weekly's* married readers during 1948.

Conclusion

During 1948, *Woman's Weekly* engages explicitly and implicitly with governmental policy. Outwardly supportive of Labour's austerity measures and establishment of the Welfare State, the magazine nevertheless obliquely criticises both; articulating albeit implicit opinions on party politics, it departs from its previously apolitical stance, although its political allegiance is difficult to establish for certain. As during previous years surveyed by this study, *Woman's Weekly* readers seem intensely aware of their class status, particularly in relation to working-class women: an aspect of their lower-middle-class identity that has not altered since before the Second World War. Indeed, the social impact of the war, and of Labour's post-war policies, may even be exacerbating their desire to distinguish themselves from the working classes.

In another notable departure from previous years, *Woman's Weekly's* depictions of paid employment for even unmarried women tend towards the negative. Their negativity conflicts with both government policy and the growing social acceptability of working wives, and suggests that the magazine believes its readers' role in rebuilding post-war society should be purely domestic; positive depictions of fulltime housewifery reinforce this belief, although suggestions that wives have no alternative hint that the latter are feared not to be accepting these

pro-domestic discourses readily. The final chapter of this thesis, which examines lower-middle-class domestic culture in *Woman's Weekly* during 1958, looks for further signs of resistance to fulltime housewifery. Published in a Britain to which prosperity has returned, magazines issued during 1958 assume a more affluent readership than during any of the previous years examined.

Chapter Six: Consumerism

1958

By the late 1950s, Britain's economy was thriving. Government controls had been lifted,¹ manufacturers had resumed production for the domestic market,² and employment remained almost full;³ their earnings rising more rapidly than prices,⁴ Britons grew more affluent, and private savings rose, home ownership increased, and sales of aspirational domestic commodities such as washing machines, cars, and televisions boomed.⁵ Food rationing had ended in 1954;⁶ finally, the future of domestic plenty anticipated by advertisements in *Woman's Weekly* during the closing months of the war seemed to have materialised. Addressing a Conservative Party rally in July 1957, Prime Minister Harold Macmillan claimed that Britons had "never had it so good".⁷ Surveying *Woman's Weekly* magazines issued during 1958, this final chapter will examine the publication in a land of peace and plenty. Again, its argument is divided into sections determined by themes presented by *Woman's Weekly*. "A modernising market" examines the magazine's position in a market being changed by two post-war phenomena, teenage culture and television; "Consuming leisure" examines its readers' consumption of domestic appliances. "Knitting: leisure or

¹ David Childs, *Britain Since 1945: A Political History* (London: Routledge, 2001), 77-78.

² Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Austerity in Britain: Rationing, Controls, and Consumption 1939-1955* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 237; John Ramsden, *The Age of Churchill and Eden, 1940-1957* (London and New York: Longman, 1995), 249.

³ Alan Booth and Sean Glynn, *Modern Britain: An Economic and Social History* (London: Routledge, 1996), 192.

⁴ Childs, *Britain*, 105-106.

⁵ Kenneth O. Morgan, *The People's Peace: British History 1945-1989* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 123-125.

⁶ Morgan, *Peace*, 124.

⁷ Ibid.

labour?” explores the status of knitting in the magazine, and the handicraft’s contradictory relations with consumerism; “Homemaking husbands and happy marriages” looks at *Woman’s Weekly*’s participation in the do-it-yourself decorating craze, which had implications for both masculinity and marital relations during the late 1950s. “*Woman’s Weekly* and *The Feminine Mystique*” examines the magazine’s housework discourses through the lens of Betty Friedan’s seminal feminist text; “Working wives!” examines the changing status of the latter; finally, “Worried mothers, wayward daughters, future readers” suggests that, in its treatment of anxieties surrounding teenage culture, *Woman’s Weekly* aims to safeguard its own future. In addressing these issues, this chapter explores some familiar and new points of ideological contradiction within the magazine’s discourses. Again, readers may not be as well-off financially as the magazine assumes; again, they seem ambivalent towards leisure-class culture, and again, *Woman’s Weekly* acknowledges that housewifery can be frustrating whilst not providing an alternative. Alongside these by-now familiar contradictions, there emerges a conflict within its attitude towards working wives. Moreover, in its DIY discourses and features targeting teenagers, the magazine works to resolve conflict.

A modernising market

Within Britain’s booming post-austerity culture of domestic consumerism, shifts were occurring within the magazine market. Advertising revenue was growing, enabling publications to increase in length at prices their readers could afford;⁸

⁸ Cynthia L. White, *Women’s Magazines 1693-1968* (London: M. Joseph, 1970), 157.

following the lifting of paper rationing in 1953,⁹ several new titles, including *Woman's Realm*, *Woman's Day*, *Mirabelle*, and *Marilyn* were launched.¹⁰ Precursors of the 1960s "boom" in magazine publishing for teenage girls,¹¹ the latter two herald the appearance of a new, commercially exploitable category of femininity: school-leavers with jobs and disposable incomes.¹² During the coming decades, as newly launched teenage magazines *Mirabelle* and *Marilyn* indicate, the needs and wants of teenage girls will fragment the women's magazine market further. The 1950s also saw the death of interwar weeklies including *Home Chat*, *Home News*, and *Home Companion*, "period pieces" now considered "out of sync" with the modern domestic market.¹³ This market, according to Cynthia White, was dominated by service weeklies that, recognising that their readers' disposable incomes were increasing, modernised themselves in appearance and sought to hasten the rise of living standards by promoting the latest appliances and home furnishings.¹⁴ Anticipating Alan Jackson's contention that literatures of domesticity grew increasingly classless during the post-war period, White argues that the magazines emerging as "leading publications" during the late 1950s were those that developed "formula[s] appropriate to women in all walks of life" whose lifestyles, tastes, and aspirations were increasingly homogenising;¹⁵ once again, spot-comparisons between *Woman's Weekly* and other titles will undermine these notions of classlessness and suggest,

⁹ James Chapman, *British Comics: A Cultural History* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 2011), 54.

¹⁰ White, *Magazines*, Appendix IV.

¹¹ Brian Braithwaite, *Women's Magazines: The First 300 Years* (London: Peter Owen, 1995), 69.

¹² Andrew Rosen, *The Transformation of British Life 1950-2000: A Social History* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2003), 108.

¹³ Braithwaite, *Women's Magazines*, 72.

¹⁴ White, *Magazines*, 160-162.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 169-170.

instead, that domestic magazines produced during the late 1950s targeted readers from very specific demographics, with anxieties and aspirations distinctive of their class. This point is crucial in understanding the aesthetics of the magazine.

Amidst shifts in the magazine market, *Woman's Weekly* held its own, claiming, during 1958, the third largest circulation behind *Woman* and *Woman's Own*. Its readership was falling, however, a trend that would continue until 1967.¹⁶ That the magazine's circulation had doubled between 1946 and 1950¹⁷ indicates that its inexpensive blend of practical advice and escapism had appealed strongly during the post-war period of austerity and domestic privation – its loss of readers from 1955 onwards could, therefore, be attributed in part to shifts in their needs and desires following the end of rationing. During the same period, however, a rise in television ownership was taking place. Janice Winship observes that, by the 1960s, soap operas and situation comedies on commercial TV were rivalling magazine fiction, tackling “moral themes” such as “family, marriage and romance” – “the power and influence” of television were such, she suggests, that magazine editors could probably have done little to prevent a drop in sales figures during that decade.¹⁸ By 1958, eight million British households had a television license.¹⁹ Although televisions themselves are not advertised in *Woman's Weekly* during that year, references to television by adverts for other products assume that readers, although perhaps not yet able to afford sets of their own, are becoming familiar with television culture, and associating it with

¹⁶ Ibid. White's figures show that *Woman* claimed a circulation of 3,346.5 million, *Woman's Own*, 2,505 million, and *Woman's Weekly*, 1,615.8 million, during the first half of 1958.

¹⁷ 727,500 to 1,582.4 million (White, *Magazines*, Appendix IV).

¹⁸ Janice Winship, *Inside Women's Magazines* (London: Pandora, 1987), 43-44, 148.

¹⁹ Brian R. Mitchell, *International Historical Statistics, Europe 1750-1993* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 1998), 778.

desirability. HP Sauce is endorsed by TV comedians Hylda Baker, Ben Warris, and Jimmy Jewel,²⁰ and Primula and Dairylea cheese spreads are marketed as TV snacks:²¹ the medium, it seems, is becoming embedded in readers' daily lives. With hindsight, these adverts are a form of Trojan horse, familiarising *Woman's Weekly* readers with a medium that would lessen the need or desire of some for the magazine. Constituting the first appearance of television in the publication during the years surveyed by this thesis, however, they reflect the modernisation of British culture, and of *Woman's Weekly*, during the period under review.

Consuming leisure

Increases in *Woman's Weekly* readers' wealth and opportunities to consume materialise in the first, cursory flip through 1958 copies of the magazine, which have clearly been produced within a markedly more prosperous climate than ten years previously. Their cover price has increased by a penny to 4d; thanks, no doubt, to the lifting of paper rationing and increase in advertising revenue, the number of pages per issue has almost doubled, to around fifty-eight; a greater number of photographs and broader range of fonts, made possible by advances in print technology,²² have increased their visual appeal. Corresponding rises in the cover price and material quality of *My Weekly* and *Good Housekeeping* suggest that the magazine market, as a whole, has recovered from the war and entered a

²⁰ Adverts, "HP Sauce," WW 1 Mar 1958, 50; 3 May 1958, 53.

²¹ Advert, "Primula" cheese spread, WW 2 Aug 1958, 53; advert, "Dairylea" cheese spread, WW 1 Mar 1958, 47.

²² Elizabeth Wilson, *Only Halfway To Paradise: Women in Postwar Britain, 1945-1968* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1980), 37.

period of plenty.²³ Advertisements for shoes²⁴ and even engagement rings²⁵ are appearing in *Woman's Weekly* for the first time during the years surveyed, and advertisers are luring readers with lavish cash prizes: £1000 and a washing machine for buying washing powder;²⁶ £3000 for naming a flour mascot.²⁷ One-off knitting and cooking supplements, in black and white but with full-colour covers, offer readers more magazine for their money; free embroidery transfers, now included in copies of the magazine, are plentiful, and one issue even contains a free selection of Peri-Lustra embroidery silks, their colours still bright after sixty years in the British Library's periodicals archive (Fig. 31).²⁸

IMAGE DELETED

Fig. 31. Free embroidery silks and transfer. (There is insufficient silk to complete the design, so the reader must buy more.) (Transfer and silks, WW 19 Apr 1958, between 60 and iii).

Brimming with material possibility, *Woman's Weekly* maintains the emphasis on leisure characteristic of the publication during 1948. Housework advice remains scarce, limited as then to one-off responses to readers' queries and the occasional feature;²⁹ the bulk of increased copy space is occupied by

²³ Back on sale each Tuesday, *My Weekly* now costs 3d, and its length has increased to twenty pages; *Good Housekeeping*, now costing 2s, has resumed its coffee-table-sized pre-war dimensions (21.5cm x 28cm) and is around 137 pages long.

²⁴ E.g. advert, "Van-Dal" shoes, WW 5 Apr 1958, 39.

²⁵ E.g. advert, "James Walker Jewellery," WW 1 Mar 1958, iii. Aptly, this advert for engagement rings is printed opposite "Mrs Marryat Advises", where readers' romantic dilemmas are addressed.

²⁶ Advert, "Persil" laundry soap, WW 1 Mar 1958, ii.

²⁷ Advert, "Spillers Self-Raising Flour," WW 1 Mar 1958, 33.

²⁸ Transfer and silks, WW 19 Apr 1958, between 60 and iii.

²⁹ E.g. "Washable Kid Gloves," WW 13 Sept 1958, 55; Cécile, "A Little Care For Your Carpets," WW 21 Jun 1958, 43; "Everyday Advice," WW 27 Dec 1957, 51.

leisure – fiction, travel, conduct, knitting, embroidery, do-it-yourself, a series of articles about the British royal family, and advertisements. Even Cécile's cookery pages are shifting their focus towards leisure, helping readers to entertain as well as to feed their families cheaply.³⁰ During 1948, I argued, *Woman's Weekly's* emphasis on leisure reflected a readership tired of keeping house under austerity and eager for escapism. Ten years later, it seems to reflect readers with more money, more commodities to spend it on, and a strong desire to participate in Britain's growing culture of consumerism.

A strong indicator of their growing prosperity, *Woman's Weekly* readers seem finally able to afford labour-saving, leisure-producing domestic appliances. Cookers, washing machines, and a tumble dryer are advertised in the magazine, mostly between September and October in anticipation of Christmas;³¹ a carpet cleaning supplement advocates the use of vacuum cleaners,³² and Cécile now includes Regulo Marks and cooking temperatures in her recipes, indicating that she presumes her readers to be using ovens rather than ranges. More implicitly, the magazine's issue day has changed from Tuesday to Monday, suggesting that readers are now spending considerably less time performing what until recently will have been one of their lengthiest and most arduous weekly chores: laundry. Monday has traditionally been washing day, when servantless housewives who did their laundry by hand would soak, scrub, boil, rinse, wring, mangle, hang, iron, air, fold, and put away their families' clothing and household linen – the entire process, achieved with the help of washboard, scrubbing brush, mangle or

³⁰ E.g. Cécile, "Sweet And Savoury Flans," *WW* 4 Oct 1958, 34-35; C, "Snacks For A Buffet Party," *WW* 27 Dec 1958, 12-13.

³¹ E.g. advert, "Electrical Development Association" cookers advert, *WW* 27 Sept 1958, 1; advert, "Gas Council" washing machines, *WW* 2 Aug 1958, 31; advert, "Parnall Auto-Dry" tumble dryer, *WW* 6 Dec 1958, 48.

³² Cécile, "A Little Care For Your Carpets," *WW* 21 Jun 1958, 43.

wringer, and lashings of scalding water, could take a whole day, perhaps longer,³³ and it seems unlikely that, prior to their being able to afford washing machines, many *Woman's Weekly* housewives would have found much time for magazine-reading. Indeed, Winship recalls that her mother's *Woman's Weekly* "used to be unopened until she'd done the weekly wash".³⁴ Whether or not the magazine was deliberately issued on Tuesdays as a treat to which readers could look forward whilst elbow-deep in washing is now, owing to missing editorial and publishing records, impossible to determine – it does, however, seem plausible that the change of issue day from Tuesday to Monday reflects an assumption that, by 1958, its readers own appliances that have reduced the amount of time it takes them to do their laundry. Finally able to afford technology that will save them "untold amounts of time and labour" demanded by their daily chores,³⁵ *Woman's Weekly* readers seem to have the capacity to lead more leisured lifestyles.

Whilst *Woman's Weekly* readers' assumed ownership of ovens, vacuum cleaners, and washing machines indicates that they are more affluent than they were during the previous years surveyed, they remain behind the wealthier middle middle classes in their ability to afford the latest domestic technology. During October, November, and December 1958, *Woman's Weekly* publishes a total of eight domestic appliance adverts, one every 43.5 pages; glossy domestic monthly *Good Housekeeping*, however, publishes 151, one every 2.7 pages. Evidently, advertisers for domestic appliances still consider *Woman's Weekly*

³³ Christine Zmroczek, "Dirty Linen – Women, Class and Washing Machines, 1920s-1960s," *Women's Studies International Forum* Volume 15, Issue 2 (1992): 11.

³⁴ Winship, *Inside*, 1.

³⁵ Jim Obelkevich, "Consumption," *Understanding Post-war British Society*, ed. Jim Obelkevich and Peter Catterall (London: Routledge, 1994), 146.

readers less profitable. Moreover, many readers of *Woman's Weekly* may still lack the capacity to run some labour savers: as I suggested in Chapter Five, Electrical Development Association (EDA) adverts indicate that, during 1958, many *Woman's Weekly* homes may not yet be wired for electricity. The status of these adverts in the magazine is complex. Firstly, rather than urging readers to have electricity installed, they promote electrical appliances such as cookers and immersion heaters; secondly, the same adverts appear in *Good Housekeeping*, which suggests that readers of this more upmarket title may also lack domestic electricity.³⁶ Taken alone, these factors appear to undermine my contention that readers of *Woman's Weekly* and *Good Housekeeping* belong to different economic demographics, and support White and Jackson's belief that literatures of homemaking became increasingly classless during the post-war years. The contexts in which they appear, however, alter their signification. Since over ten per cent of British homes had yet to acquire electricity in the early 1950s,³⁷ it is quite possible that some *Good Housekeeping* readers still lack the capacity to run electrical appliances – I have already highlighted the aspirational quality and function of labour-saver adverts in this magazine. However, the volume of adverts for electrical appliances in *Good Housekeeping* makes it likely that more of this publication's readers are assumed to have electricity installed in their homes: already able to run cookers and immersion heaters, these readers might, therefore, understand EDA adverts at face value, i.e. as adverts for the commodities they feature rather than for electricity itself. Targeted by far fewer adverts for domestic appliances, *Woman's Weekly* readers seem more likely to

³⁶ E.g. adverts, "Electrical Development Association," *GH* Sept 1958, 3; Nov 1958, 147.

³⁷ Obelkevitch, "Consumption," 145.

interpret the EDA's message as encouragement to have electricity installed in their homes, and the appliances they promote as incentives – the cheap “installation” and “running costs” to which they refer could apply to appliances, or to electricity itself. If this is the case, then these adverts' assumption that *Woman's Weekly* readers' homes are already wired for electricity is another example of social flattery, used, I have argued, by the magazine to sell things they do not have, want to have, and might feel ashamed to admit to not owning. Suggesting that *Woman's Weekly* readers' homes may not yet be as technologically advanced as they appear to be, their presence in the magazine, within the context of other advertisements, positions the latter in a lower class demographic to readers of *Good Housekeeping*.

Since its readers may not, after all, have access to expensive domestic technology, *Woman's Weekly*'s hand-care discourses continue to help them maintain the impression that they have help with rough chores. Advertisers of Lux and Persil washing powders assure readers that the products will not damage their hands;³⁸ hand cream Nulon, an advert promises, soothes hands made “rougher, dryer” through constant immersion in hot water.³⁹ Now, however, *Woman's Weekly* readers have access to an affordable domestic innovation that makes it even easier for them to preserve ‘leisured’ hands: rubber gloves. Invented in 1889 for surgery but not brought into general domestic use until after the Second World War, rubber gloves protected housewives' hands from the hot water and chemicals that caused them to redden and sometimes blister, painful

³⁸ E.g. advert, “Lux” laundry soap, WW 7 Jun 1958, 39; advert, “Persil” laundry soap, WW 1 Mar 1958, ii.

³⁹ Advert, “Nulon” hand cream, WW 6 Dec 1958, 49.

evidence that they did their own housework;⁴⁰ they are embraced by *Woman's Weekly's* Beauty Expert, who advises correspondents to wear them for “all washing and washing up” and rough chores,⁴¹ and promoted by nine adverts throughout the year. An advert for Marigold rubber gloves makes explicit the continuing link between housewives' hands and their class status by demanding that readers put their

[h]ands up! How do yours look? Can the world read ‘housewife’ between the lines? Then learn that you don’t need mink and diamonds to have high-society hands. Marigold House Gloves *keep your hands untouched by work.*⁴²

Conscious of being classified by the appearance of their hands, probably still unable to buy or run washing machines, *Woman's Weekly's* 1958 readers purchase Marigolds, Dunlops and Glovelies as a means of creating the impression that they belong to the established middle classes. That they remain eager to disguise physical evidence of rough housework suggests that the magazine's change of issue day from Tuesday to Monday may be flattering – a means of helping them to distinguish themselves from working-class women like readers of *My Weekly*, which does not advertise domestic appliances at all, and which continues to be issued on Tuesdays.

⁴⁰ In 1889, American surgeon William Stewart Halsted commissioned protective rubber gloves from the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company to protect the sensitive hands of Caroline Hampton, his surgical nurse and fiancée (Robert B. Taylor, *White Coat Tales: Medicine's Heroes, Heritage, and Misadventures* [Switzerland: Springer, 2016], 220-221; Lucy Lethbridge, *Spit and Polish: Old-Fashioned Ways to Banish Dirt, Dust and Decay* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 61.

⁴¹ E.g. Beauty Expert, “Make Your Beauty Resolutions,” *WW* 4 Jan 1958, 2; BE, “Never Too Busy For Beauty,” *WW* 29 Mar 1958, 2.

⁴² Advert, “Marigold” rubber gloves, *WW* 5 Apr 1958, 55.

Knitting: leisure or labour?

A more affordable means of participating in post-austerity Britain's growing culture of consumerism is presented by *Woman's Weekly's* knitting discourses, which promote the handicraft as a means of consuming the latest products and fashions. Patterns printed in the magazine during the Second World War and 1948 had presented knitting as a means of making do with material shortages, instructing readers to, for instance, unravel and reknit unwanted garments, and rejuvenate worn-out jumpers by shortening their sleeves; ten years later, no longer restricted by paper and wool rationing, *Woman's Weekly* knitters are presented with three or four patterns per issue, and encouraged to work with an increased variety of wool brands, weights, and colours, all presumably made possible by manufacturing innovations and British industry's return to production for the domestic market. The proliferation of knitting in post-austerity *Woman's Weekly* appeals to a readership of enthusiastic, accomplished knitters, whose passion for the craft is central to the magazine's niche identity within the late-1950s market. During the second week of March 1958, *Woman's Weekly*, *My Weekly*, *Home Notes*, and *Woman's Own* all promote knitting patterns on their front covers; but whereas *My Weekly*, *Home Notes*, and *Woman's Own* promote one pattern each, *Woman's Weekly* promotes three, a cable-knit woman's cardigan, a plain woman's cardigan, and a cardigan for a little girl. "4-Page Pull-Out Special Knitting For Baby Inside" declares a caption beside the latter, anticipating more patterns within. All four magazines hope to attract knitters, these covers suggest: *Woman's Weekly*, however, appeals to prolific knitters, on this occasion expectant mothers or grandmothers. The latter are distinguished, moreover, by their expertise. The *My Weekly* pattern is a "Simple"

sleeveless pullover given textural interest by a sequence of triangles in basic knit and purl, and *Home Notes* offers a comparatively basic white blouse; the *Woman's Own* pattern is somewhat more complex, a long-sleeved woman's cardigan with a collar and cables. The cable-knit cardigan in *Woman's Weekly* is, however, the most advanced, worked in cables that interweave rather than simply twist. A flip through other issues of the magazine confirms this pattern's assumption of knitters' high level of expertise. In addition to cabling, they are invited to tackle garments in two or more different colours;⁴³ lace patterns are worked using stitches more advanced than basic knit and purl,⁴⁴ and other advanced techniques include knitting in the round,⁴⁵ turning the heel of a sock, and knitting in circles. Instructions for executing these more complex stitches are given at the beginning of each pattern, along with an explanation of the abbreviations used – these instructions are cursory however, and assume a basic level of knowledge, how to work knit and purl for instance, and it is therefore unlikely that beginners would manage to execute them successfully. The addition of alternative sizes to some clothing patterns, a feature introduced since 1948, suggests that *Woman's Weekly* readers are no longer assumed capable of adapting the latter to fit – nevertheless, their relatively high level of expertise distinguishes them from the target readerships of other domestic women's magazines (Fig. 32).

⁴³ E.g. "Fair Isle – The Man's Way," WW 11 Jan 1958, 42-44; "Nothing Is So Important As A Pretty Hat," WW 1 Feb 1958, 31-32; "Raglans For Boys And Girls," WW 3 May 1958, 32-34, 36.

⁴⁴ E.g. "The Fancy Vest," which deploys slip stitch, passing slip stitch over, and make (WW 1 Jan 1958, 27). Slip stitch involves slipping a stitch from the left-hand to the right-hand needle; passing slip stitch over involves passing the slipped stitch over the following knitted stitch on the right-hand needle; make involves passing the yarn to the front of the right-hand needle in order to create a new stitch before the following stitch is knitted or slipped.

⁴⁵ Working around five needles, to knit a tube.

IMAGES DELETED

Fig. 32. Knitting patterns on *Woman's Weekly*, *Home Notes*, *Woman's Own*, and *My Weekly* front covers (clockwise from top left: *WW* 8 Mar 1958, fc; *HN* 6 Mar 1958, fc; *WO* 5 Mar 1958, fc; *MW* 8 Mar 1958).

Woman's Weekly magazines issued during 1958 present knitting as a means by which its readership of accomplished knitters can participate in consumerism and celebrate the end of austerity. The profusion of knitting patterns in the magazine invokes a pleasurable sensation of plenty and choice – no single knitter is likely to work each one, but it must feel good, following years of making do with very little, to know that they have more than they can use. *Woman's Weekly* evidently hopes to profit from increased consumer choice, recommending wool by brand as well as weight at the start of each knitting pattern, and brokering deals with specific retailers for hard-to-get products. These special offers, whilst doubtless providing a valuable service for readers with limited access to shops, push business in the direction of specific manufacturers and vendors, who will have paid the magazine for the privilege of

helping to make these materials available:⁴⁶ Cynthia White points out that this ‘product placement’ in magazines became increasingly common during the 1950s.⁴⁷ *Woman’s Weekly*’s knitting patterns themselves have become more vociferously enthusiastic about colour, suggesting shades of wool beneath photographs of models showing off finished garments. The bucolic nature of these colour names – “deep peony red, hyacinth blue, paddock green, or copper brown”⁴⁸ – invokes the pre-industrial, rural, “organic communities” posited by *The Man Who Sees* as a moral antidote to late-1930s mass culture, and in doing so, implicitly complicates *Woman’s Weekly* knitting discourses’ enthusiasm for consumerism: as I argued in Chapter Three, during 1939 *The Man* perceived consumerism, a product of mass culture, as a threat to the ‘traditional’ civic values he sought to promote in his liberal humanist vision of an ideal society. I discuss the moral purpose of knitting in *Woman’s Weekly* in more detail below. Although, since they are evidently suggesting colours by brand name, these lists are presumably another marketing ploy on behalf of specific wool manufacturers, in their appeal to knitters who until recently were making do with rationed and recycled wool in a far more limited palette, they convey a sense of joy at the return of previously scarce materials and the end of dreary austerity; they are also, arguably, a capitalist device to encourage spending. *Woman’s Weekly* knitting, previously associated with making do with material shortages, is now presented as a means of asserting one’s spending power within a more prosperous, consumerist post-war society.

⁴⁶ E.g. knitters struggling to obtain a particular hat shape (buckram hat mould, to be fitted with knitted cover) can purchase one from a stock reserved especially for *Woman’s Weekly* readers at John Lewis, mail order available (“Your Spring Hat In Angora,” *WW* 1 Mar 1958, 7).

⁴⁷ White, *Magazines*, 156-157.

⁴⁸ “It Has A Low Front Fastening,” *WW* 1 Mar 1958, 15.

Commensurate with its links to spending, knitting in *Woman's Weekly* during 1958 is associated with costly, aspirational lifestyles. Garments are associated visually with the upper classes by the situations in which they are photographed, and patterns draw on the very latest trends. An aptly named “Jacket With Distinction” is modelled beside some ornate ironwork that evokes the terrace of a stately home;⁴⁹ “A Double Knitting Jersey”⁵⁰ is knitted in “the mood of the moment”.⁵¹ Amongst these efforts to make homemade appear *haute couture* is a pattern that directly echoes fashion advice given in the same issue of the magazine. “A Gay Jersey In Three Stripes” boasts “The Newest Neckline [...] The Scarf Collar Is New” claims the pattern’s tagline;⁵² nineteen pages later, fashion columnist The London Girl predicts that “an entirely new scarf collar” will be a feature of this autumn’s coats.⁵³ *Woman's Weekly* knitters, these patterns imply, have access to styles modelled by aristocrats and the standard-bearers of fashion. Moreover, by associating knitting with high society, *Woman's Weekly* elevates the craft as well as the knitter. Referring to themselves rather grandly as designs, patterns reinforce associations between homemade garments and *haute couture*, and imply that their maker is engaging in a creative process rather than merely following a set of instructions. “Have you a talent for colours?” asks the pattern for a knitted jacket, before (in case the knitter does indeed feel deficient in this respect) suggesting two-colour combinations of wool for the jacket, and dress colours they would match.⁵⁴ By invoking talent, this

⁴⁹ “Jacket With Distinction,” WW 4 Oct 1958, 27.

⁵⁰ “Double Knitting” refers to wool weight, rather than to knitting two strands of wool simultaneously.

⁵¹ “A Double Knitting Jersey,” WW 1 Nov 1958, 18.

⁵² “A Gay Jersey In Three Stripes,” WW 6 Sept 1958, 32.

⁵³ The London Girl, “Whispers,” WW 6 Sept 1958, 51.

⁵⁴ “This One Is *Extra* Thick,” WW 1 Feb 1958, 43.

pattern gives the knitter the status of artist and knitting the status of art; this association is also made visually, by a photograph of a cardigan modelled beneath a framed painting on the wall of a living room (Fig. 33).⁵⁵ The room's expensive furnishings associate painting and cardigan with luxury and domestic leisure: knitting, the photograph suggests, is a means by which *Woman's Weekly's* 1958 readers can participate in the lifestyles towards which they aspire.

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Fig. 33. A painting in the background alludes to knitting's status as art. Note also the list of colours ("For All Time Wear in 3 Sizes," WW 3 May 1958, 24).

The relationship between *Woman's Weekly's* knitting discourses and consumerism is, however, complex and contradictory. I have observed already that the bucolic colour names of the wools promoted by the magazine associate the craft with The Man Who Sees' late-1930s vision of a society founded on pre-industrial civic values, constructed partly as a moral remedy for the impact on communities of mass-market consumerism. Presumably listed in *Woman's Weekly's* black-and-white knitting patterns to attract its readers 'visually' to the wools, by associating the latter with pre-industrial rural life these colour names express an implicit sense of discomfort with the post-war culture of mass consumerism to which they belong. Moreover, knitting itself seems to articulate dissatisfaction with consumerism, implying awareness that the act of purchasing a new product may offer only momentary pleasure. Buying wool in a new, attractive colour and then using it to work a garment, *Woman's Weekly* knitters

⁵⁵ "For All Time Wear in 3 Sizes," WW 3 May 1958, 24.

prolong the manual and visual pleasure they gain from their initial purchase, enjoying an extended sense of anticipation as they fulfil their desire for a fashionable new item of clothing. Within a magazine that is ideologically distinguished by ambivalence towards leisure-class culture, the wool's colourful association with pre-industrial civic values perhaps helps to legitimise this desire; by demanding knitters' prolonged visual and manual engagement with a commodity, knitting authenticates the latter's illusory joys. Furthermore, the act of homemaking luxury garments also expresses oblique ambivalence towards consumerism: whilst displaying their capacity to purchase up-to-the-minute commodities and their eye for high-end fashion, *Woman's Weekly* knitters are also exhibiting their ability to save rather than spend. This contradiction between desires to demonstrate pecuniary extravagance and thrift arises in the magazine's knitting discourses themselves, which, whilst showcasing knitting as a means of participating in luxurious lifestyles, also associate the handicraft with domestic economy. Wool adverts emphasise the low cost of their product,⁵⁶ children's duffel coats are presumably cheaper to knit than to buy,⁵⁷ and some children's garments are unisex, meaning that they can be handed down to younger siblings of any gender.⁵⁸ This clash between extravagance and thrift is in part the result of a seemingly necessary compromise: knitting to save money, *Woman's Weekly* readers make clothes that they lack the means to buy, and by promoting 'designer' patterns and relatively cheap materials, the magazine enables them to enjoy consuming high-end fashions at prices they can afford. Its effect, however,

⁵⁶ E.g. Chadds "cost[s] less" (advert, *WW* 1 Feb 1958, ii); Ladyship Wools claim to supply "the most economical knitting wool available" (advert, *WW* 1 Nov 1958, 52).

⁵⁷ "They'll Be So Snug In Poodle Wool," *WW* 1 Jan 1958, 38-40.

⁵⁸ "Double Knitting In 3 Sizes," *WW* 1 Feb 1958, 20-22, 58-59; "Raglans For Boys And Girls," *WW* 3 May 1958, 32-34, 36.

is to strengthen a sense of ambivalence towards consumerism in *Woman's Weekly's* 1958 knitting discourses.

The conflict between extravagance and thrift in *Woman's Weekly* knitting has implications beyond supplying yet another indication of readers' assumed financial circumstances during 1958. To begin with, by framing knitting as domestic economy, the magazine recalls an attitude prevalent amongst the Victorian middle classes, who associated the handicraft with housewives' laudable ability to manage their homes with thrift.⁵⁹ By knitting clothes for themselves and their families, *Woman's Weekly* readers ensure that conspicuous displays of thrifty domestic management remain integral to housewifery in mid-twentieth-century lower-middle-class society. Secondly, *Woman's Weekly* readers' implied ambivalence towards consumerism during 1958 recalls their ambivalence towards domestic leisure. I argued in Chapter One that, during the year immediately following the Armistice, positive and virtuous depictions of housework in the magazine's domestic advice discourses made domestic productivity appear morally superior to domestic leisure – at the same time however, craft projects for homemade *haute couture* enabled its readers to participate in fashions modelled by trend-setting, leisure-class women. Combining thrifty domestic productivity with consuming the latest materials and high society trends, *Woman's Weekly's* 1958 knitting discourses negotiate a similar conflict between desires to acquire and reject domestic leisure – readers, they suggest, aspire to own expensive clothing worn by the wealthier classes, but by making and modelling fashionable garments themselves from budget

⁵⁹ Talia Schaffer, *Novel Craft: Victorian Domestic Handicraft and Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 33.

materials, they distance themselves from idle, leisured lifestyles. A conflict between desires to acquire and to reject leisure-class culture thus remains distinctive of *Woman's Weekly's* lower-middle-class domestic culture at the end of the period reviewed.

That *Woman's Weekly* readers' ambivalence towards domestic leisure should surface in its knitting discourses is apt, for the status of knitting in the magazine – leisure or labour – is difficult to determine. On the one hand, the handicraft is presented as a pleasurable leisure activity, on front covers advertising patterns alongside that week's fiction,⁶⁰ and by a photograph of a young couple enjoying an evening at home before the fire, the wife knitting whilst the husband completes a crossword⁶¹ – to the extent that knitting is an affordable means of producing clothing, however, the craft constitutes domestic labour. This definitional ambiguity is tricky to resolve. Tania Schaffer's contention that nineteenth-century middle-class housewives crafted “decorative” garments as a means of displaying their ability to “divert time and manual skill” from more utilitarian “plain” work suggests that the status of knitting could perhaps depend on the type of garment produced:⁶² the *Woman's Weekly* reader who knits a time-consuming, elaborate cable-knit cardigan, for instance, is performing an act of leisure, whereas the reader who knits a plain vest is performing domestic labour.⁶³ This distinction is undercut, however, by *Woman's Weekly* itself, in a tagline describing a pattern for elaborate knitted edgings for household linen as “work to pick up at odd moments” – referred to as

⁶⁰ E.g. WW 1 Mar 1958, fc; 6 Dec 1958, fc.

⁶¹ “Is your house warm in winter?” WW 4 Oct 1958, 32.

⁶² Schaffer, *Craft*, 29.

⁶³ “Double Knitting – For Fashion,” WW 8 Mar 1958, 12-13, 57-58; “The Stocking Stitch Vest,” WW 1 Jan 1958, 27-28.

work, this decorative project constitutes labour.⁶⁴ Amplifying resonances between *Woman's Weekly's* knitting discourses and nineteenth-century middle-class domestic culture, compromise is offered by mid-Victorian domestic advice writer Sarah Stickney Ellis, who frames knitting as a means of remaining usefully and beneficially busy during breaks from housework. In *The Wives of England* (1843), Ellis encourages middle-class housewives to knit as a means of staving off domestic boredom, detrimental, she argues, to their happiness. Since it is housewives' duty to provide happy homes for their families, and since they cannot do this if they are unhappy themselves, by knitting they produce domestic wellbeing in addition to useful garments.⁶⁵ Ellis' advice raises the possibility that *Woman's Weekly's* 1958 knitting discourses encourage and enable readers to spend their time off from housework providing for their families' emotional welfare in addition to their physical comfort: *Woman's Weekly* knitting, therefore, might best be designated productive leisure.

Homemaking husbands and happy marriages

Productive leisure is by no means restricted to housewives by *Woman's Weekly* during 1958. In a major shift from the previous years reviewed, the magazine suggests that husbands should also devote some of their time off from work to domestic labour. The presence of men in *Woman's Weekly* is not itself new: as previous chapters have shown, Mrs Marryat advises male correspondents, male writers contribute fiction to the magazine, and The Man Who Sees has dispensed conduct advice since 1937. What is new, however, is the notion that readers

⁶⁴ "Very Dainty Knitted Edgings," WW 1 Mar 1958, 32.

⁶⁵ Sarah Stickney Ellis, *The Wives of England, their Relative Duties, Domestic Influence, & Social Obligations* (London: Fisher, Son, & Co., 1843), 242, 262-263.

might expect their husbands to contribute to domestic maintenance. Mounting a serious challenge to assumptions that homemaking is an exclusively feminine occupation, a series of do-it-yourself (DIY) home decorating features encourages husbands to help their wives perform home improvements during their spare time; in doing so, they perpetuate and help to normalise changing expectations of masculinity and marital relations that were taking place during the 1950s.

During the late 1950s, a DIY craze was sweeping Britain. Thanks to rising incomes and cheaper mortgages,⁶⁶ home ownership had grown to over forty per cent;⁶⁷ more than half of British houses were over sixty-five years old, however, and their owners were keen to update them. Since professional labour was expensive, many elected to carry out renovations themselves.⁶⁸ Initially they were influenced by the make-do and mend mentality Britons had been encouraged to adopt during the war and subsequent period of austerity, and sought to redecorate their homes for as little as possible.⁶⁹ By the end of the decade however, a rise in the availability of new materials – paints, wallpapers, and tools – triggered a more consumerist approach, and DIY became an industry in its own right.⁷⁰ During the same period, an increase in paid holidays and a shortening of the working week increased the amount of leisure time available to men, and it was assumed that they would spend it in their homes with their families.⁷¹ Finding themselves expected to be both masculine and domestic, and concerned that spending more time at home would make them too similar to their

⁶⁶ Morgan, *Peace*, 124.

⁶⁷ Childs, *Britain*, 106.

⁶⁸ Sophie Leighton, *The 1950s Home* (Oxford: Shire Publications Ltd, 2009), 43.

⁶⁹ Leighton, *Home*, 43.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Andrew Jackson, “Labour as Leisure – The Mirror Dinghy and DIY Sailors,” *Journal of Design History* Volume 19, Number 1 (2006): 61.

wives, many husbands turned to DIY as a means of asserting their masculinity whilst performing ‘housework’. “Because jobs around the house had an economic value attached to them, they also carried the legitimacy of masculine skilled labour”.⁷² Participating in post-war Britain’s craze for DIY, handymen sought to legitimise their more home-centred lifestyles.

Clearly eager to participate in – and profit from – the DIY craze, *Woman’s Weekly* launched “The Young Homemakers’ Decorating Course” on 22 March 1958.⁷³ Like the presence of men, the concept of DIY home renovation is not new to the magazine – previous projects have included making corner seats,⁷⁴ distempering bathrooms,⁷⁵ and making curtains,⁷⁶ and during 1919, weekly DIY column “The Little Home” offered readers regular help with domestic improvements. What distinguishes the magazine’s 1958 DIY projects from these is that they seek to involve husbands in the work: by showing images of husbands as well as wives performing renovations, and by suggesting that these renovations should be carried out at weekends, “The Young Homemakers’ Decorating Course” establishes DIY as a leisure activity in which both partners can participate. Written by an unnamed Expert, the series guides a young married couple through the stages of renovating their home, teaching them practical skills such as hanging wallpaper,⁷⁷ boxing in bannisters,⁷⁸ tiling walls,⁷⁹ and making

⁷² Andrew Jackson, “Men Who Make: The ‘Flow’ of the Amateur Designer/Maker,” in *Extra/Ordinary: Craft and Contemporary Art*, ed. Maria Elena Buszek (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011), 270.

⁷³ “The Young Homemakers’ Decorating Course,” *WW* 22 Mar 1958, 29-32.

⁷⁴ “The Little Home,” *WW* 7 Jun 1919, 452.

⁷⁵ Contributor, “Who’s Your Letter From?” *WW* 7 Jan 1928, 2.

⁷⁶ The London Girl, “Army Blankets Make Good Curtains,” *WW* 14 Feb 1948, 18.

⁷⁷ “Lesson Two: Everything you want to know about paper hanging,” *WW* 29 Mar 1958, 29-32.

⁷⁸ “Today – Boxing-In The Balusters,” *WW* 5 Apr 1958, 27-30.

⁷⁹ “Make Your Home Your Hobby: Tiling,” *WW* 3 May 1958, 27-30.

fitted cupboards.⁸⁰ Printed from start to finish rather than dispersed throughout the magazine, these articles (which can thus be followed without having to flip pages backwards and forwards) are extremely useable, and, illustrated by photographs of a ‘real’ married couple, onto whom *Woman’s Weekly* readers can project themselves and their husbands, seemingly achievable. Depicting a husband and wife working together to improve the appearance of their home, these photographs produce and legitimise domestic masculinity in *Woman’s Weekly* and, by extension, its readers’ homes. Their primary significance to this study is that, for the first time in the years surveyed, they depict husbands playing an active role in homemaking.

Encouraging *Woman’s Weekly* readers and their husbands to spend their free time working to improve their homes, “The Young Homemakers’ Decorating Course” rearticulates the magazine’s knitting discourses’ promotion of productive domestic leisure. Portraying its subjects working happily together, the series implies that, like housewives who knit during their time off from more arduous domestic chores, married couples who make home improvements during their spare time will produce domestic wellbeing. According to contemporary thinking, their strengthened marital relationships will benefit society as well as themselves and their families. Depicting a couple working in partnership to improve their home, the photographs illustrating “The Young Homemakers’ Decorating Course” offer positive depictions of companionate marriage, notions of which were central to the drive to reconstruct a post-war Britain founded on stable family life.⁸¹ A shift towards companionate marriage, or marriage as a

⁸⁰ “Modernizing A Room: Making Fitted Cupboards,” *WW* 5 Jul 1958, 27-30.

⁸¹ Janet Finch and Penny Summerfield, “Social Reconstruction and the Emergence of Companionate Marriage, 1945-59,” in *Marriage, Domestic Life and Social Change*:

partnership of equals, had begun during the interwar period, when couples who moved to Suburbia discovered that their new homes presented more opportunities for undertaking joint domestic activities, such as gardening;⁸² the rise in home ownership during the 1950s accelerated this shift,⁸³ which may also have been motivated by women, who, having become more independent during the war, felt less inclined to subordinate themselves to their husbands afterwards.⁸⁴ The 1947 spike in divorces may also have been a contributory factor, although by the late 1950s the divorce rate had stabilised.⁸⁵ Official discourses surrounding Britain's post-war reconstruction made analogous the relationship between home and marriage;⁸⁶ in promoting companionate marriage, "The Young Homemakers' Decorating Course" reinforces this analogy. Both husband and wife take responsibility for and pleasure in the appearance and upkeep of their shared home, and renovations are presented as exercises in marital teamwork: he cuts floor tiles and she lays them,⁸⁷ she holds a tap in place whilst he loosens the washer,⁸⁸ together they haul a sack of insulating granules into their loft.⁸⁹ Working together with cheerful expressions, this enterprising couple presents a positive image of marriage as a partnership of companions,

Writings for Jacqueline Burgoyne (1944-88), ed. David Clark (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), 7.

⁸² Charles More, *Britain in the Twentieth Century* (Harlow: Pearson Education Ltd, 2007), 107.

⁸³ More, *Britain*, 132.

⁸⁴ Mark Donnelly, *Britain in the Second World War* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 44.

⁸⁵ 60,254 British couples divorced in 1947; in 1956, this figure had fallen to 26,265, and it remained below 25,000 until 1961 (Office for National Statistics, "Divorces in England and Wales: 2010," release date 8 Dec 2011. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/divorce/bulletins/divorcesinenglandandwales/2011-12-08>).

⁸⁶ Finch and Summerfield, "Social Reconstruction," 1.

⁸⁷ "For A Bright New Floor," *WW* 26 Jul 1958, 27.

⁸⁸ "Those Noises Off," *WW* 9 Aug 1958, 30.

⁸⁹ "Keep The Heat In The House!" *WW* 25 Oct 1958, 31.

whose goal is to reconstruct their domestic environment, modernising it and making it more comfortable for themselves and their future children – although visibly childless at the moment, in one feature they build a dolls’ house.⁹⁰ Shown thus, they function as a paradigm for companionate marriage as the cornerstone of British post-war society: by improving their immediate living environment and preparing it to receive children, they improve the living environment of the nation, making it a more secure, comfortable, and pleasant ‘home’ in which future citizens can flourish.

The model of companionate marriage constructed by “The Young Homemakers’ Decorating Course” emerges as distinctively lower middle class through comparison to DIY features in glossier domestic weekly, *Woman*. Costing 5d, *Woman* is a penny more expensive than *Woman’s Weekly*; commensurate with its higher cover price, its pages are larger, and its front cover and some of its features are printed in colour. The higher economic status of *Woman*’s target readership emerges in adverts for home decorating materials, which, including carpets, rugs, and linoleum,⁹¹ are aimed at consumers with greater incomes than *Woman’s Weekly* readers, who are targeted by adverts for more inexpensive lacquers and floor stains.⁹² Supporting my thesis that *Woman’s Weekly*’s lower-middle-class culture is not, as Bourdieu and Crosland suggest, simply a cut-price, inauthentic version of middle-class culture, the publications’ differing

⁹⁰ “Highly Desirable Residence,” *WW* 29 Nov 1958, 27-30.

⁹¹ Advert, “British Carpet,” *W* w/e 15 Mar 1958, 60; advert, “Lamtex” pure wool rugs, *W* w/e 15 Mar 1958, 62; advert, “Staines Colourama” linoleum, *W* w/e 29 Mar 1958, 45.

⁹² Advert, “Valspar 24 Hour Lacquer,” *WW* 7 Jun 1958, 48; advert, “Darkaline” floor stain, *WW* 7 Jun 1958, 52.

approaches to DIY point to differences between their readers' values, as well as their incomes.

Delivering clear, step-by-step instructions to readers and their husbands, *Woman's Weekly's* DIY features focus on the manual practicalities of home decorating, and assume that both partners will share the work. DIY features in *Woman*, however, are more occupied with design and shopping for materials – they suggest that these activities, rather than manual construction, constitute wives' contribution to DIY. Both magazines urge their readers to transform their homes using newly available wallpapers⁹³ – but whereas *Woman's Weekly* focuses on describing how to carry out the task and leaves readers to choose wallpapers to suit their own tastes and budgets (“[o]nly you can decide the colour, pattern and price”),⁹⁴ *Woman* devotes a double-page spread to a full-colour review of five wallpapers,⁹⁵ and omits instructions for hanging them. A sixteen-page “Home Decorating” pull-out focuses on interior design, suggesting that readers should choose colours by gauging the “feel” of a room, and collate a ‘mood board’ of fabrics, paper, and carpet clippings, which will help them to avoid mistakes whilst shopping for materials:⁹⁶ construction work, the pull-out suggests, is a “do-it-yourself job for very handy husbands”.⁹⁷ Whilst *Woman's Weekly* readers labour alongside their husbands, readers of *Woman* assume charge of aesthetic and budgeting decisions whilst their husbands do the manual work.

⁹³ Leighton, *Home*, 43.

⁹⁴ “Lesson Two: Everything you want to know about paper hanging,” *WW* 29 Mar 1958, 30.

⁹⁵ Edith Blair, “Garden Bouquets are News in Furnishing,” *W* w/e 25 Jan 1958, 14-15.

⁹⁶ Edith Blair, “Five steps to good decorating,” *W*, w/e 22 Feb 1958, 2-3.

⁹⁷ Edith Blair, “Camouflage for problem fireplaces,” *W*, w/e 22 Feb 1958, 14.

Within the context of contemporary DIY marketing discourses, *Woman's Weekly* readers' manual participation in home renovation appears anomalous. Jen Browne points out that, although women were shown in adverts for DIY materials, they were rarely shown actually doing DIY – “which suggests that the product manufacturers behind this advertising saw women's role as primarily designers and decision-makers”.⁹⁸ Encouraging its readers to make design decisions that will be put into practice by their husbands, *Woman* reinforces these messages; *Woman's Weekly* however, showing its readers how to carry out manual home improvements with their husbands, refutes them. This refutation distinguishes *Woman's Weekly's* DIY features from those in *Woman* by gender and class. Encouraging wives to perform so-called masculine domestic work – generally photographed wearing trousers, the young housewife even looks ‘masculine’ as she labours with her husband – *Woman's Weekly's* DIY features are more progressive than those in *Woman*, which suggest that heavy manual work should be left to men (Fig. 34). Moreover, whilst *Woman's Weekly* readers seem happy to perform rough labour, *Woman*, by shielding its readers from the latter, is effectively helping them to avoid dirtying their hands – *Woman's Weekly* readers' ‘hands-on’ attitude recalls the pride in domestic productivity they showed during the interwar period, when they seemed less concerned about openly doing their housework than readers of middle-middle-class *Good Housekeeping*, who were anxious to maintain the appearance of employing servants. Although by 1958 servant-keeping has ceased to be a middle-class distinction, by seeking to separate its readers from the rough manual labour

⁹⁸ Jen Browne, “Decisions in DIY,” in *All the World and Her Husband: Women in Twentieth-Century Consumer Culture*, ed. Margaret R. Andrews and Mary M. Talbot (London and New York: Cassell, 2000), 139.

required by DIY home improvements, *Woman* reveals vestiges of interwar middle-class housewives' anxieties about being seen to be doing their own rough housework. Encouraging wives and husbands to work together, both publications present DIY within a framework of companionate marriage, and seek to normalise domestic masculinity; but whereas *Woman* shifts the burden of manual labour onto the husband, maintaining its middle-middle-class target readers' distance from rough chores, *Woman's Weekly* encourages its readers to participate in the manual labour, commensurate with its distinctively lower-middle-class attitude towards housework.

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Fig. 34. The Young Homemakers make home improvements together; the wife wears trousers, and participates in the manual labour ("This Week They Make Clothes Posts," *WW* 27 Sept 1958, 28).

Woman's Weekly and *The Feminine Mystique*

Throughout 1958, *Woman's Weekly* continues to maintain the impression that fulltime housewifery is enjoyable and fulfilling. Surrounded by and contributing to discourses of domestic plenty, images of happy housewives seem less compensatory than they did during leaner years; reflecting the rising living standards associated with domestic technology, new cleaning products, and modernised interiors,⁹⁹ they articulate an increased sense of excitement about

⁹⁹ Obelkevich, "Consumption," 145-147.

women's role within the home.¹⁰⁰ The housewife grinning triumphantly as she holds aloft a bottle of Zal disinfectant, her spotless apron gleaming as brightly as the “kitchen, toilet, [and] bathroom” she has just cleaned,¹⁰¹ may also be expressing delight at having had indoor plumbing installed in her house;¹⁰² the housewife smiling with pleasure as she uses Kleenoff to dab “the hardest baked-on grease” off the inside of her oven's door¹⁰³ may be thrilled to be rid of her difficult-to-clean range. Likewise, the housewives illustrating domestic advice columns revel in modern domestic interiors,¹⁰⁴ simple, “streamlined” and easy to clean (Fig. 35).¹⁰⁵ Drawings of happy housewives have disappeared from Cécile's cookery pages, presumably to make room for the increased number of photographs, but the captions drawing readers' attention to her recipes make domestic food production seem like a satisfying and pleasurable task.¹⁰⁶ Cooking, like knitting, is presented as a means of showing off readers' domestic prowess: recipes for party food encourage them to entertain their friends,¹⁰⁷ and, whilst consuming these tasty dishes, guests can admire the aprons, antimacassars, and placemats their hostesses have embellished with the help of *Woman's*

¹⁰⁰ Nicola Humble, *Culinary Pleasures: Cookbooks and the Transformation of British Food* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd, 2005), 136-137.

¹⁰¹ Advert, “Zal” disinfectant, *WW* 21 Jun 1958, 44.

¹⁰² By the late 1950s, it became “mandatory” for local authorities to provide willing homeowners with grants to install fixed bathtubs, sinks, and indoor toilets, and hot and cold running water (Janet Shepherd and John Shepherd, *The 1950s Home* [Stroud: Amberley, 2017], chap. 4, iBook).

¹⁰³ Advert, “Kleenoff” oven cleaner, *WW* 19 Apr 1958, 53.

¹⁰⁴ E.g. Cécile, “I Wish I Knew The Best Way,” *WW* 2 Aug 1958, 45; C, “Housewives With A Problem Ask Cécile,” *WW* 16 Aug 1958, 43.

¹⁰⁵ Browne, “Decisions,” 141-142.

¹⁰⁶ E.g. Cécile, “Can You Make A Steak And Kidney Pudding? A Most Rewarding Dish!” *WW* 26 Apr 1958, 24-25; C, “Keep A Good Stock Of Biscuits – We Think You Will Enjoy Baking These,” 8 Nov 1958, 18-19.

¹⁰⁷ E.g. Bacon circle snacks, fried cheese dice, luncheon fan (salad of sliced luncheon meat, egg, and cucumber, arranged in a fan with a cauliflower and mayonnaise garnish) (Cécile, “Try A New Kind Of Supper Snack,” *WW* 7 Jun 1958, 18-19).

Weekly's embroidery transfers.¹⁰⁸ Echoing the magazine's knitting discourses, which revelled in the newly available materials they promoted, these discourses express a sense of joy at the end of rationing and the appearance of new domestic products – surrounded by domestic plenty, *Woman's Weekly* readers are encouraged to revel in the appearance of their homes, and in their roles within them. Husbands may be participating in the manual construction of their homes, but the responsibility for keeping them clean and showing them off, these adverts suggest, continues to lie with wives.

IMAGES DELETED

Fig. 35. Positive depictions of housewifery illustrate a Zal advert and domestic advice column (advert, "Zal," WW 21 Jun 1958, 44; Cécile, "I Wish I Knew The Best Way," WW 2 Aug 1958, 45).

But these glowing depictions of housewifery may perhaps conceal a darker domestic reality. Alva Myrdal and Viola Klein argue that images exalting housewifery in 1950s women's magazines may be symptomatic of their readers' dissatisfaction, rather than contentment, with their domestic role and status: their glorification of domesticity is persuasive, rather than reflective of readers' actual lives, "as if women [need] convincing that their lot is better than they thought".¹⁰⁹ Feminist Betty Friedan makes a similar argument in *The Feminine Mystique*, accusing popular domestic magazines of using unrealistic depictions of happy housewives to perpetuate myths that women's natural role, and therefore their sole means of achieving personal fulfilment, is homemaking.

¹⁰⁸ "Gay Mexico! The Third Of Our Free Gift Transfers," WW 4 Oct 1958, 16-17.

¹⁰⁹ Alva Myrdal and Viola Klein, *Women's Two Roles: Home and Work* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1968 [1956]), 145.

Domestic magazines, Friedan argues, produce and perpetuate a culture in which women's lives and interests are confined to the home; peddling idealised depictions of homemaking whilst failing to depict women with careers, they suggest that their readers have no alternative other than to keep house full time. Unfortunately however, Friedan argues, housewives' lived experiences of homemaking contradict the blissful images they are consuming. Bored with and unfulfilled by fulltime housewifery, many are experiencing depression – fully persuaded that their rightful role in society is homemaking, they are unaware that homemaking itself is causing their condition. Many are taking antidepressants, and some have even taken their own lives. By the early 1960s, Friedan writes, the media, home economists, and educators are acknowledging depressed housewives' so-called "problem with no name" – equally blind to its cause however, they are unable to offer an adequate solution. Suburban housewives, Friedan argues, are incarcerated within a culture that recognises their discontent but fails to recognise itself as its cause. Making homemaking appear desirable and not allowing their readers to contemplate paid employment as an alternative, domestic magazines are complicit in this culture's production.¹¹⁰

Before examining the domestic culture produced by *Woman's Weekly* during 1958 alongside *The Feminine Mystique*, which became a bestseller in Britain as well as America,¹¹¹ it is important to qualify the latter's position, relative to both British culture and the American magazine culture it critiques. To begin with, Joanne Meyerowitz argues that post-war American domestic

¹¹⁰ Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965 [1963]), 13-60.

¹¹¹ Catríona Beaumont, "'What is a Wife'? Reconstructing Domesticity in Postwar Britain before *The Feminine Mystique*," *History of Women in the Americas* Volume 3 (2015): 62.

magazines offered their readers far more complex depictions of femininity than Friedan suggests, “celebrat[ing] nondomestic activity, individual striving, public service, and public success” in addition to advocating domesticity.¹¹² Highlighting Friedan’s political motivation for writing *The Feminine Mystique*, Ali Haggett offers a possible explanation for her failure to acknowledge this complexity.¹¹³ Moreover, Judy Giles points out that middle-class housewives in post-war suburban America were not confined to their homes as Friedan suggests; far from being “infantile” dependants on their husbands, they were active in their communities, sitting on committees, performing voluntary work, even holding down part-time or (“albeit less frequently”) fulltime jobs.¹¹⁴ In any case, the magazine culture criticised by Friedan is located in post-war America, not Britain, and is associated with a different band of middle-class society than that targeted by *Woman’s Weekly*. As Giles observes, *The Feminine Mystique*’s social scope is narrow: Friedan’s subjects (and indeed, its targets) are, like herself, middle class, affluent, and university or college educated.¹¹⁵ *Woman’s Weekly* readers, who manifestly did not attend university, are far less likely to be giving up the prospect of well-paid, stimulating careers in order to keep house; probably working prior to marriage in monotonous, low-grade clerical jobs with few opportunities for promotion, they belong to a demographic that, according to Myrdal and Klein, was disposed to view fulltime homemaking as a favourable

¹¹² Joanne Meyerowitz, “Beyond the Feminine Mystique: A Reassessment of Postwar Mass Culture, 1946-1958,” *The Journal of American History* Volume 79, Number 4 (1993): 1458.

¹¹³ Ali Haggett, *Desperate Housewives, Neuroses and the Domestic Environment, 1945-1970* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2012), 12.

¹¹⁴ Judy Giles, *The Parlour and the Suburb: Domestic Identities, Class, Femininity and Modernity* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2004), 150.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 155.

alternative to paid employment.¹¹⁶ Besides which, post-war British housewives experienced homemaking differently to their American counterparts. British suburbs tended to be smaller and less geographically distant from towns than their American equivalents, meaning that suburban homes were less isolated; domestic appliances were still a relative novelty for many in Britain, whereas in America they had been widely available for longer. British housewives seem, on the whole, to have been less frustrated by fulltime homemaking than those in America – Hackett argues that, although the professional practice of clinical psychology was expanding in post-war Britain, and although psychosomatic theorists were growing more interested in how individuals responded to their environments, “there is a discernable lack of evidence to suggest that monotonous housewifery was causing neurotic illness in middle-class suburban wives”.¹¹⁷ Friedan’s critique of housewifery does not, therefore, apply directly to the experience of *Woman’s Weekly* readers.

The above qualifications notwithstanding, there are distinct parallels between Friedan’s domestic magazine culture and the domestic culture constructed by *Woman’s Weekly* during 1958. Presenting housewifery as enjoyable and fulfilling, *Woman’s Weekly* recalls the magazine culture criticised by Friedan. Although medical evidence suggests that rates of “neurotic illness” were low in British housewives during the late 1950s, advertisements for pick-me-ups target housewives with depression;¹¹⁸ other adverts suggest that, although housework can be difficult and frustrating, the fault lies with the

¹¹⁶ Myrdal and Klein, *Roles*, 9.

¹¹⁷ Haggett, *Housewives*, 8.

¹¹⁸ E.g. Anadin tablets claim to “[calm] the nerves and [replace] depression with a sense of well-being” (advert, *WW* 5 Apr 1958, 52); Bonomint chewing gum claims to combat “depression” (advert, 5 Jul 1958, iii).

housewife rather than with the work itself. “Her husband was fed up ...and no wonder!” sighs one, at a housewife’s failure to greet her spouse with an immaculate home on his return from work: she drinks Lucozade, recovers her energy, and marital harmony is restored.¹¹⁹ Jean’s tiredness and lack of enthusiasm for socialising are putting her marriage to Jimmy under strain: thanks to Horlicks she recovers her old self, a first class entertainer worthy of compliment by Jimmy’s (male) friends. “Wonderful cook, wonderful woman. You’re a lucky man, Jimmy!” (Fig. 36).¹²⁰ Once again, adverts urge *Woman’s Weekly* readers to consume products that will cement their domestic status. By implying that a housewife’s inability to run her home to the standards set by her husband will destroy her relationship with the latter, they use emotional pressure to persuade them not merely to buy the tonics they are promoting, but to use them to become perfect homemakers. Echoing these adverts, *The Man Who Sees* suggests that the solution to domestic frustration is to become a better, happier homemaker. “It is commonly supposed that the lot of the housewife, with husband and children away for most of the day, is a lonely and monotonous one. And so it may well be” he writes, seeming to distance *Woman’s Weekly* from domestic magazines criticised by Friedan, which, bombarding readers with unrelentingly positive portrayals of homemaking, ignore its negative aspects.¹²¹ The solution he offers is, however, to cultivate pleasure in domesticity – rather than encouraging housewives to address their dissatisfaction by seeking alternative occupations, thereby challenging the assumption that their natural role is domestic, he reinforces this assumption by urging them to find ways of

¹¹⁹ Advert, “Lucozade,” tonic drink, *WW* 1 Feb 1958, 55.

¹²⁰ Advert, “Horlicks,” tonic drink, *WW* 4 Jan 1958, iii.

¹²¹ *The Man Who Sees*, “The Joys Of The Homemaker,” *WW* 9 Aug 1958, 32.

enjoying housewifery. In seeming to acknowledge housewives' domestic frustrations on the implied understanding that their primary role is homemaking, these discourses recall Roland Barthes' notion of ideological inoculation – "admitting the accidental evil of a class-based institution the better to conceal its principal evil".¹²² By admitting to minor issues, Barthes suggests, a repressive system can protect itself from challenge ("generalized subversion") by distracting attention from more major problems.¹²³ Suggesting that housewives' approach to housework, rather than housework itself, is causing their discontent, tonic adverts and *The Man Who Sees* seek to prevent them from questioning their domestic role. Their recognition of housewives' frustration, but failure (or refusal) to acknowledge fulltime homemaking as its cause recalls the culture criticised in *The Feminine Mystique*. Their solution is for *Woman's Weekly* readers to become better housewives.¹²⁴

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Fig. 36. A Horlicks advert acknowledges downsides to fulltime homemaking, but implies that married women have no alternative (advert, "Horlicks," WW 4 Jan 1958, iii).

¹²² Roland Barthes, "Myth Today," in *Mythologies* by Roland Barthes, trans. Annette Lavers (London: Vintage, 1993 [1972]), 178.

¹²³ Barthes, *Mythologies*, 178.

¹²⁴ Peg Bracken's 1960 *The I Hate to Cook Book*, American but published in the UK at the same time (Humble, *Culinary*, 202), takes a similar approach. A collection of 'convenience' recipes targeting housewives who dislike cooking, it wittily acknowledges the tedium of domestic labour ("never compute the number of meals you have to cook and set before the shining faces of your loved ones in the course of a lifetime") – assuming that its readers have no choice but to cook for their families however, it offers them no alternative and can, like *The Man Who Sees*, only attempt to make the task less arduous (Peg Bracken, *The I Hate to Cook Book* [New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2010 [1960]], 5).

A similar set of assumptions underlies a *Woman's Weekly* story allowing readers to challenge notions that marriage should involve fulltime domesticity, before seeking to persuade them that fulltime domesticity is a state towards which they aspire. Joan and Tom, heroine and hero of "A Pattern Of Their Own" by Sheila Frazer, have been antagonists since childhood: the daughter of over-protective parents, young Joan envied Tom his freedom, whilst Tom, the son of a busy mother with an active social life, envied Joan her stable family life. Both rebelled against their upbringings, Joan by becoming secretary to a well-known impresario and playwright, Tom by seeking a domestically-minded wife; a year before the narrative begins, Tom offended Joan by taking her out, kissing her, and then insisting that, since they were now engaged, she give up her glamorous job, clothes, and lifestyle in preparation for housewifery. "[T]he girl he married would be a home girl, craving no life but one bounded by the four walls of their home".¹²⁵ A non-fatal train crash forces him to reassess his marital expectations: walking Joan home afterwards, he apologises for having tried to make her what she is not, and suggests that their marital relationship, rather than reproducing those of their parents, should follow "a pattern of our own"¹²⁶ – his implication being that Joan need not become a fulltime housewife if that would make her unhappy. Despite this climb-down, Tom still gets the housewife of his dreams: dissatisfied with her lifestyle and job, Joan will, the narrative suggests, happily give up both to become his wife.

As it relates to the present argument, "A Pattern Of Their Own" is remarkable chiefly for seeming to recognise the unfairness of women's position

¹²⁵ Sheila Frazer, "A Pattern Of Their Own," *WW* 5 Apr 1958, 22.

¹²⁶ Frazer, "Pattern," 54.

in a society that, whatever their aspirations and potential, expects them to become fulltime housewives after they marry. “By the time she reached her [...] teens the cocoon-like comfort of her home had begun to stifle Joan [...] she longed to reach out and grasp life with both hands”.¹²⁷ In thus articulating its heroine’s discontent, Frazer’s narrative foreshadows *The Feminine Mystique*, which documents young women’s sense of frustration at being denied the freedoms given their brothers.¹²⁸ Depicting a little girl resenting her future of housewifery and motherhood, and a little boy who, like the man he will become, is free to enter and leave the home as he pleases, a narrative flashback to Joan and Tom’s initial meeting is heavy with feminist symbolism. She is hosting a dolls’ picnic in the front garden of her parents’ house; he marches in uninvited and then rides away on a bicycle; she “watche[s] him pedal madly down the road [...] her heart filled with [...] Envy of his fine, careless freedom to do just as he pleased”.¹²⁹ It is tempting to suggest that, by encouraging *Woman’s Weekly* readers to recall their own childhood aspirations, Frazer may be encouraging them to question their current domestic roles, and that Joan’s ultimate decision to give up work after she marries is a sop to a code of behavioural conduct drawn up by fiction editors; after all, that Frazer appears to be earning, or at least supplementing, her living by writing suggests that her lifestyle and values differ from those of the fulltime housewives targeted by *Woman’s Weekly*. (Since the same applies to married women who write for other domestic magazines, and indeed nineteenth-century domestic writers Isabella Beeton and Sarah Stickney Ellis, both of whom were wives, Frazer is not unique in this respect.) Without

¹²⁷ Ibid., 20.

¹²⁸ Friedan, *Mystique*, 67.

¹²⁹ Frazer, “Pattern,” 20.

relevant records however, to suggest that she deliberately invites *Woman's Weekly's* housewife-readers to question their domestic role is speculation – her story's narrative also suggests that paid employment is less enjoyable than readers might suppose, and that homemaking is a far more desirable alternative. Joan's trajectory functions, therefore, as another form of ideological inoculation: fulltime housewifery may appear unattractive, but compared to working for a living it is highly desirable. Again, a *Woman's Weekly* narrative suggests that although fulltime housewifery may seem dissatisfying, married women have no other option.

Working wives!

The domestic culture produced by *Woman's Weekly* during 1958 is, however, distinct from the culture produced by Friedan's domestic magazines in one important respect: it addresses working readers, and admits that some of them are married. In doing so, the magazine registers a significant shift in its attitude towards women and employment, reflecting shifts in society more broadly. During the late 1950s, the expectation remained that most British women would, after leaving school, enter training, find a job, and then marry.¹³⁰ What was changing, however, were assumptions that they would leave work permanently after marrying. As Stephanie Spencer suggests, Britain's return to productivity for the domestic market and the growth of consumerism, which increased opportunities both to work and to spend, gave wives greater incentives for finding jobs;¹³¹ part-time work was especially attractive, since it allowed them to

¹³⁰ Stephanie Spencer, *Gender, Work and Education in Britain in the 1960s* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 6.

¹³¹ Spencer, *Gender*, 6.

earn money whilst maintaining their domestic responsibilities, and by 1961, twenty-six per cent of Britain's labour force consisted of married women working part-time.¹³² Writing in the mid-1950s, Myrdal and Klein observed that increasingly, wives were working until motherhood, taking career breaks whilst their children were young, and then returning to work once they were older;¹³³ the pattern they describe might potentially be followed by the only fictional working wife to appear in *Woman's Weekly* during 1958, a secretary who leaves work after falling pregnant.¹³⁴ As she is the only example of her kind to appear in the magazine during 1958, her presence alone cannot be taken as evidence that it now sanctions working wives. It is, however, beginning to accept that some of its married readers work, or would like to, although it remains undecided over whether or not they should.

Commensurate with relaxing social attitudes towards working wives, by 1958 *Woman's Weekly's* employment discourses have resumed the positivity towards women in paid employment they expressed during the interwar and war years. Once again, a paucity of careers or workplace conduct advice indicates that the magazine continues to address a largely housewife readership; dress patterns and beauty advice for office workers,¹³⁵ and recruitment adverts promoting the School of Chiropody and Manchester City Police, do, however, cater for white-collar workers and jobseekers. Fictional portrayals of women's employment are, once again, favourable. Working heroines' occupations are

¹³² Gerry Holloway, *Women and Work in Britain since 1940* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 197.

¹³³ Myrdal and Klein, *Roles*, 30-40.

¹³⁴ John Nield, "Mr Cooper's Secret Sorrow," *WW* 5 Jul 1958, 42-47.

¹³⁵ E.g. "A Good-Looking Dress With Eye-Catching Detail," *WW* 6 Sept 1958, 12-13; Beauty Expert, "First Steps To Beauty," *WW* 25 Jan 1958, 6; BE, "Beauty Touch-Ups," *WW* 10 May 1958, 2.

enjoyable and fulfilling,¹³⁶ and heroines themselves are efficient and good at what they do;¹³⁷ heroes are attracted to these qualities, and once again professional partnerships blossom into romance (a further oblique gesture towards companionate marriage).¹³⁸ Workplace romances have resumed their career-conduct function, offering jobseekers, or jobseekers' mothers, glimpses into working environments. Again, these include clerical work and nursing,¹³⁹ although a romance between a "continuity girl" and documentary maker allows readers to fantasise about glamorous jobs in television.¹⁴⁰ working in a relatively new industry, this heroine helps to expand readers' employment horizons.

Unmarried working heroines sustain the impression that during 1958, paid employment remains the domain of single women. This impression is reinforced by advertisements, which, whilst portraying professional women's lifestyles positively, make it clear that their subjects are unmarried;¹⁴¹ *The Man Who Sees*, too, continues to treat paid work as a profitable stopgap between school and marriage, assuming that working women "hope for [the ultimate

¹³⁶ Shorthand typist Violet has "a comfortable furnished room in a nice district and [...] a job she loves" (Monica Stuart, "The News In Her Letter," *WW* 11 Jan 1958, 14); Laura "like[s]" teaching history at a girls' boarding school (Myfanwy Price, "Harum-Scarum Girl," *WW* 28 Jun 1958, 14).

¹³⁷ Secretary Jenny is "efficient" and "indispensible" (Elizabeth Beresford, "Angie," *WW* 29 Mar 1958, 12); advertising copywriter Polly has "a brilliant future" ("The Quick Brown Fox," *WW* 8 Nov 1958, 20-23, 52-54).

¹³⁸ "Continuity girl" Meg falls in love with documentary maker Terry whilst working on a film (Elizabeth Beresford, "The Remarkable Love Affair," *WW* 1 Mar 1958, 18-22, 58-59); typist Janet falls in love with her employer ("Promotion For Janet," *WW* 30 Aug 1958, 16-20, 51).

¹³⁹ Elizabeth Beresford, "Angie," *WW* 29 Mar 1958, 12-16, 18, 52-54; Lucilla Andrews' serial "The Fair Wind" declares itself career conduct fiction with the heading, "There Are Few Careers So Interesting And Worthwhile As That Of The Hospital Nurse" (*WW* 4 Jan 1958, 4-5).

¹⁴⁰ Elizabeth Beresford, "The Remarkable Love Affair," *WW* 1 Mar 1958, 18-22, 58-59.

¹⁴¹ A teacher without wedding or engagement rings sleeps better for drinking Bourn-vita (advert, *WW* 4 Jan 1958, ii); thanks to Colgate toothpaste, an office worker enjoys an after-work date (advert, *WW* 1 Mar 1958, 52).

woman's role of wife and mother] [...] at the end of this period of 'marking time'".¹⁴² Reinforcing *Woman's Weekly's* newfound positivity towards female employment, he does, however, acknowledge that working between school and marriage might be personally as well as economically profitable, urging mothers in a separate Talk to encourage and support daughters who show an aptitude for a career different to one that they, themselves, would prefer them to have.¹⁴³ Notably, this Talk addresses the prospects of sons as well as daughters, and suggests that both should receive equal encouragement to pursue their professional aspirations. These aspirations are clearly gendered – sons, The Man suggests, might aspire to be nuclear scientists, and daughters, to be actresses or models – nevertheless, at no point does he state, or even imply, that girls should choose their careers with a view to housewifery. Alongside favourable fictional depictions of working women, The Man Who Sees' encouragement of young women's professional aspirations produces a more relaxed, positive attitude towards female employment than that materialising in *Woman's Weekly* during 1948. The assumption that women with jobs are single appears to remain; urged to pursue non-domestic ambitions however, female school-leavers are permitted to view paid employment as something more than training for housewifery.

Within this increased positivity towards women's employment, there are indications that *Woman's Weekly* is becoming more accepting of working wives. Correspondence from the latter is extremely scarce, but that which does appear helps, in most cases, to legitimise their status in the magazine. Margaret declares that she is "thinking of getting a job although it is some years since [she] last

¹⁴² The Man Who Sees, "Women At Work," WW 22 Mar 1958, 53.

¹⁴³ The Man Who Sees, "Your Daughter's Ambition," WW 14 Jun 1958, 47-48.

worked” in her letter to the magazine’s Beauty Expert,¹⁴⁴ and Amanda tells the latter that, although her husband complains when she pins up her hair at night, she cannot do this during the day since she still works;¹⁴⁵ they give no details of their occupation or planned occupation, but it is possible that they belong to the increasing number of women who are working part-time to help raise their families’ living standards. That their letters have been printed indicates, moreover, that their predicaments are believed to resonate with a wider married and working readership. But whilst these letters point to a growing acceptance that some married *Woman’s Weekly* readers have or may be seeking jobs, the magazine is unconvinced that it is advisable for them to do so. To begin with, wives with part-time jobs are absent from the magazine’s fiction, and there are no features discussing how to look for part-time work – the suggestion is that, whilst *Woman’s Weekly* accepts that some married readers have jobs, it is reluctant to encourage them. The Man Who Sees and Mrs Marryat offer an explanation for this reluctance. Debating the issue of working wives, The Man expresses concerns that, unless she can afford expensive labour-saving appliances, a wife will be unable to “keep a home shining as it ought to be kept, and a family fed and clothed and comfortable as it should be kept” alongside a job, and risks leaving herself “too little energy” for friends and socialising;¹⁴⁶ similar concerns may underlie Mrs Marryat’s response to WD, whom she advises to provide for her husband and children by caring for them at home rather than by taking on paid work, even though her income would help her family to move

¹⁴⁴ Beauty Expert, “Top To Toe Beauty Hints,” WW 26 Jul 1958, 2.

¹⁴⁵ Beauty Expert, “Fresh Beauty For You,” WW 11 Jan 1958, 2.

¹⁴⁶ The Man Who Sees, “At Home And Away,” WW 31 May 1958, 25.

from a rented flat into a house of their own.¹⁴⁷ Perpetuating assumptions that wives remain solely responsible for housework, they worry about the impact of women's double burden, paid work and unpaid domestic labour, on married readers and their families. The irony is that *Woman's Weekly's* consumerist discourses provide its married readers with incentives to work. Their material and social aspirations, the magazine suggests, are becoming more financially accessible: whilst raising concerns about the effects of the double burden, by advertising washing machines, ovens, and holidays the magazine motivates its married readers to seek paid employment.

Worried mothers, wayward daughters, future readers

Gesturing towards *Woman's Weekly's* formal open-endedness, the closing section of this final chapter will address briefly efforts by the magazine to court its future readership: teenage daughters of its current readers. In the opening section of this chapter, I suggested that the 1950s launch of teen magazines *Mirabelle* and *Marilyn* pre-empted the boom in titles targeting teenage girls that took place during the following decade. Teenage culture was a relatively new phenomenon in post-war Britain, and its rise also attracted the attention of established titles. Mary Grieve, who edited *Woman* at the time, saw it as an opportunity to cement her magazine's future readership, and began a weekly "teenage page" that would, she hoped, attract younger readers and remind older readers to pass their copies on to teenagers. Her initiative worked, and by the mid-1950s, *Woman's* readership included "a favourable ratio" of sixteen- to

¹⁴⁷ "Mrs Marryat Advises," WW 4 Jan 1958, 56.

twenty-four-year-olds.¹⁴⁸ Although *Woman's Weekly* does not feature a regular teenage page during 1958, conduct features targeting teenage girls suggest that it, too, is reaching out to this new market. Teenage culture was a source of social concern during the 1950s; by treating teenage readers with understanding, two features in particular seek to convince them that the magazine has their interests at heart.

Woman's Weekly uses the term “teenager” only very sparsely during 1958, its appearance in a tagline for a cardigan pattern and a Talk by The Man Who Sees constituting two rare examples.¹⁴⁹ The word’s scarcity in the magazine corresponds to the relative newness of teenagers as a distinct social group in post-war Britain. First used in late-1930s America to denote young people aged between ten and twenty, “teenager” became attached to a similar demographic in Britain during the 1950s.¹⁵⁰ Since *Woman's Weekly*’s concerns about teenage girls centre on those who have left school and entered paid employment however, in discussing the magazine’s relations with the latter I use the age bracket applied by market researcher Mark Abrams, who, in 1959, designated teenagers “young people” between the school leaving age (fifteen from 1947¹⁵¹) and marriage, or twenty-five.¹⁵² Indeed, the magazine pre-empt’s Abrams’ designation, implying in a feature promoting clothing patterns for those aged “From Two To Fifteen Years” that it regards anyone younger than the school

¹⁴⁸ Mary Grieve, *Millions Made My Story* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1946), 135.

¹⁴⁹ “Neatly Fashioned Cardigans,” WW 7 Jun 1958, 32-34; The Man Who Sees, “As Your Mother Sees You,” WW 24 May 1958, 21.

¹⁵⁰ Dominic Sandbrook, *Never Had It So Good: A History of Britain from Suez to the Beatles* (London: Little, Brown, 2005), 435.

¹⁵¹ Selina Todd, *Young Women, Work, and Family in England 1918-1950* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 1.

¹⁵² Mark A. Abrams, *The Teenage Consumer* (London: London Press Exchange, 1959), 3.

leaving age as a child.¹⁵³ Grieve's sixteen- to twenty-four-year-old "teenage" readership fits a similar age category. Inasmuch as they are defined by age, teenagers' visibility in *Woman's Weekly* is not new. Although a dearth of practical workplace and employment advice has indicated that the age of the publication's target readers has risen since 1918, girls and young women in their 'teens' have sought the advice of Mrs Marryat and The Beauty Expert throughout the years reviewed, perhaps having consulted their mothers' copies of the magazine.¹⁵⁴ Moreover, to the extent that it offers models of desirable conduct for young women who are living at home and working in paid employment between leaving school and getting married, a chief and ongoing concern of the magazine's romance fiction has been the outlook and behaviour of teenagers. During 1958 however, the presence of conduct articles addressing young, unmarried women, who work in paid employment and live with their parents, indicates that *Woman's Weekly* now views this newly-defined demographic with increased concern.

In expressing concern about the behaviour of teenagers, *Woman's Weekly* participates in more general social anxiety. The rise of teenage culture in 1950s Britain was associated closely with increasing affluence, consumerism,¹⁵⁵ and

¹⁵³ "From Two To Fifteen Years," WW 4 Jan 1958, 9.

¹⁵⁴ E.g. Mrs Marryat advises The Dinky Typist, aged fifteen ("Mrs Marryat Advises," WW 7 Jan 1928, 36), Worried, aged seventeen ("Mrs Marryat Advises," WW 15 Jan 1944, 84), and Susan, aged nineteen ("Mrs Marryat Advises," WW 31 Jan 1948, 140); the Beauty Expert is consulted by Triste, aged twenty-four ("Beauty – And You!" WW 12 May 1928, 849), and Worried Sixteen ("Recipe for Beauty," WW 27 May 1958, 1075). An oral history interviewee recalls that, as teenagers, she and her friends "got a lot of information" from *Woman* and *Woman's Own* (Adrian M. Horn, *Juke Box Britain: Americanisation and Youth Culture, 1945-60* [Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009], 144).

¹⁵⁵ Sue Bruley, *Women in Britian Since 1900* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1999), 118; Sandbrook, *Never*, 437.

social instability.¹⁵⁶ In a climate of full employment, teenagers capitalised on high demand for youth labour;¹⁵⁷ tending to live with their parents, their living costs were relatively low,¹⁵⁸ and they could afford to spend the majority of their earnings on “luxuries and entertainments” such as clothes, records, and the cinema.¹⁵⁹ Consciously modern, they sought in their spending choices to distinguish themselves from their parents’ generation, and many belonging to the latter were shocked by their seemingly “carefree, profligate [...] rebuke” to the “thrift and caution” they exercised themselves:¹⁶⁰ teenagers’ lifestyles exposed a so-called generational gap between the material values of those who had lived through the interwar and war years, and those who had not.¹⁶¹ Concerns about teenage culture were fuelled by a statistical rise in juvenile delinquency during the 1950s.¹⁶² Adrian Horn suggests that this rise can be explained in part by changes to policing methods, and methods of recording crimes¹⁶³ – nevertheless, he notes, worried contemporaries blamed it on “social upheaval” brought about by the war, the impact of absent fathers and working mothers being of particular concern.¹⁶⁴ Moreover, since 1950s teenage culture was associated primarily with working-class young men, who could afford to go out and socialise whilst their middle-class counterparts were still in education,¹⁶⁵ these anxieties were probably exacerbated by class prejudice. Concerns about teenagers surface in a range of fiction published during the 1950s. The generation gap emerges in

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 104-105.

¹⁵⁷ Horn, *Juke Box*, 96.

¹⁵⁸ Abrams, *Teenage Consumer*, 9.

¹⁵⁹ Sandbrook, *Never*, 436.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 437.

¹⁶¹ Horn, *Juke Box*, 100.

¹⁶² Ibid., 104.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 104-105.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 103; Sandbrook, *Never*, 441.

relations between teenage Arrietty and her parents Pod and Homily Clock, protagonists of Mary Norton's *Borrowers* novels; in *The Borrowers*, published in 1952, Arrietty's adventurousness creates domestic upheaval for her more cautious parents, and endangers the lives of all three of them.¹⁶⁶ Family background is raised as a reason for delinquency in Agatha Christie's 1952 novel *They Do It With Mirrors*, set largely in a corrective home for male juvenile delinquents – "[u]nspeakable home he came from" remarks the institution's owner about one inmate, adding later that the latter's "origin" is "humble", a euphemism for working class.¹⁶⁷ Published during 1957, *The Midwich Cuckoos* by John Wyndham pushes fears about delinquent teenagers to an extreme. The Cuckoos – humanoid "Children" mysteriously implanted in the women who give birth to them – are effectively parentless; capable of using their minds to control adults, they are resistant to traditional figures of authority, a characteristic emphasised by a scene in which a boy induces a senior police officer to sweat, vomit, and fall unconscious. Causing the inhabitants of Midwich to physically injure and even kill themselves and one another, the Children attack a seemingly "stable society" from "within"¹⁶⁸ and ultimately, are destroyed. As an alien species, the narrative suggests, they cannot successfully be integrated into human society, and are therefore eliminated to ensure the latter's survival. In seeking to influence the conduct of teenagers, *Woman's Weekly* responds to fears underpinning these fictional works. Rather less extreme than *The Midwich Cuckoos*, the magazine aims to assimilate them by helping them to negotiate

¹⁶⁶ Mary Norton, *The Borrowers* (London: Heinemann Educational, 1983 [1952]).

¹⁶⁷ Agatha Christie, *They Do It With Mirrors* (London: Collins, 1952), 32, 95.

¹⁶⁸ John Wyndham, *The Midwich Cuckoos* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books in association with Michael Joseph, 1973 [1957]), 114-115.

conflicts with their mothers. In doing so, it acknowledges their desires for more freedom and independence.

Woman's Weekly conduct features targeting teenage girls do not portray the latter as delinquent in the criminal sense, presumably since to do so could insult daughters and imply parental failure. Rather, the behavioural issues they tackle suggest that teenagers lack respect for parental authority, and are seeking to define themselves in opposition to their parents by leading more 'modern' lifestyles. Responding to their perceived impulse towards greater independence, The Man Who Sees scolds them for neglecting to communicate with their parents if they have been delayed on their journeys home from work, and for failing to attend to their domestic duties;¹⁶⁹ in a separate Talk, he urges them to behave considerately towards their parents.¹⁷⁰ Conduct articles "Why Have You Such Old-Fashioned Ideas?" and "Why Shouldn't I Have A Home Of My Own?" indicate that daughters' sexual respectability is of particular concern. "[L]ong hours spent dancing and [...] holding each other close can develop into something more intimate and [...] dangerous" warns the former, responding to a teenage daughter's demand to be allowed to stay out late with boyfriends; perhaps its writer envisages a scene similar to that described by Jane, the narrator of Lynne Reid Banks' 1961 novel *The L-shaped Room*, in which a couple in a crowded jazz club "[run] their hands all over each other" as they dance.¹⁷¹ (As though confirming the article's fears, Jane has sex with her own date after

¹⁶⁹ The Man Who Sees, "As Your Mother Sees You," WW 24 May 1958, 47; domestic appliances, Sandbrook notes, reduced the amount of time spent by teenage girls in helping their mothers (*Never*, 435).

¹⁷⁰ The Man Who Sees, "The Art Of Growing Up," WW 5 Jul 1958, 19, 52-53.

¹⁷¹ Lynne Reid Banks, *The L-shaped Room* (London: The Reprint Society, 1961 [1960]), 111.

dancing with him.¹⁷²) Boyfriends' status is not discussed explicitly; but since the article is discussing the feared consequences of late-night dancing, it seems likely that young working-class men with cash are the focus of its concern. Addressing teenage daughters who would like to move out of their parents' homes before they marry, "Why Shouldn't I Have A Home Of My Own?" points out that their mothers and fathers can help them determine the suitability of potential husbands – again, sexual conduct seems to be an underlying worry. Like conduct features in wartime *Woman's Weekly*, "Why Have You Such Old-Fashioned Ideas?" and "Why Shouldn't I Have A Home Of My Own?" are seeking to protect their readers from the social consequences of illegitimacy. Post-war society maintained a conservative attitude towards sexuality, and sexual policy, not least the emphasis on family stability, sought to redress the sexual freedom practised by some under wartime conditions. Contraception was not reliable, abortions were not legal, and illegitimate pregnancies were shameful, for both mother and child¹⁷³ – the consequences of even consensual sex could be severe and lasting, and these articles address concerns that teenage girls' lifestyles and 'modern' values are putting them at risk. As during the war, their targets' social, as well as moral, status seems to be at stake: when Jane falls pregnant she is thrown by her father out of their suburban home and lives, for the majority of her pregnancy, in a cheap, squalid bedsit in an "ugly, degraded district" of Fulham.¹⁷⁴ Eager to help teenage readers escape a similar fate, these

¹⁷² Banks, *Room*, 113-114.

¹⁷³ Bernice Martin, "Postwar Austerity to Postmodern Carnival," in *The Great, the New and the British*, ed. Anneke Ribberink and Hans Righart (Hilversum: Uitgeverij Verloren, 2000), 41.

¹⁷⁴ Banks, *Room*, 42.

Woman's Weekly conduct articles aim to help them preserve their own moral and social standing, not least by separating them from working-class culture.

In seeking to influence teenage readers' behaviour, "Why Have You Such Old-Fashioned Ideas?" and "Why Shouldn't I Have A Home Of My Own?" seem careful to avoid alienating them, acknowledging their perceived desires for greater independence whilst making them aware of their mothers' perceived concerns. Their aim, in doing so, may be to attract a teenage readership to *Woman's Weekly*. Both articles are written by Denise Robins, a popular romance novelist who also publishes fiction in the magazine during 1958.¹⁷⁵ Robins is therefore a familiar name to regular readers; writing characters and situations with which they are supposed to identify, she is evidently assumed able to relate to their concerns, and her authority is increased by her advertised status as a mother of daughters.¹⁷⁶ Acknowledging the personal nature of the issues addressed, each column consists of a letter from an eighteen-year-old daughter to her mother, followed by her mother's reply; articulating both sides of each argument, they acknowledge and validate the outlooks of both daughters and mothers, and are presumably intended to help readers work through similar disputes of their own. Notably, the daughters, in setting out their arguments for having more independence, demonstrate that their mothers' fears are in fact groundless. In making her case for being allowed to attend late dances, the first explains to her mother that she can be trusted to behave decently and discreetly with boyfriends;¹⁷⁷ asking permission to move into a flat of her own, the second

¹⁷⁵ "The Chateau of Flowers" by Robins is serialised in *WW* between 25 January and 12 April 1958.

¹⁷⁶ Denise Robins, "Why Have You Such Old-Fashioned Ideas?" *WW* 20 Sept 1958, 16.

¹⁷⁷ Robins, "Old-Fashioned Ideas?" 16.

states that her personal safety will not be compromised, since she will have access to a telephone and supportive neighbours, and that she will choose her boyfriends carefully.¹⁷⁸ Presumably reassured by their daughters' implied instance that they can be trusted to remain both sexually continent and socially discerning in their conduct towards young men, both mothers grant the independence they ask for, having first articulated their own reservations. Thus, in helping *Woman's Weekly* readers to negotiate domestic conflict, Robins' epistolary conduct columns show teenage daughters that the magazine understands and respects their desire to lead more independent lifestyles – by suggesting that they must make similar promises to their own mothers in order to be granted similar freedoms however, the columns aim to safeguard the magazine's established values within the next generation of readers, reassuring mothers in doing so. Helping older readers adapt to change and persuading younger readers to maintain continuity with the past, *Woman's Weekly* positions itself as custodian of tradition, and looks to its own future.

Conclusion

During the final year examined by this thesis, *Woman's Weekly* is a site of conflict between forward- and backward-looking lifestyles and values. The magazine is produced in a climate of material prosperity, and its target readers are revelling in opportunities to spend; thanks to television culture, domestic appliances, and more streamlined, easy-to-maintain homes, their lifestyles are modernising, and their values are modernising too, evidenced by the presence in

¹⁷⁸ Denise Robins, "Why Shouldn't I Have A Home Of My Own?" *WW* 5 Jul 1958, 12-13, 46.

the magazine of newly domestic husbands, working wives, and a conduct feature encouraging mothers of young women in their late teens to allow their daughters to live independently before marrying. These signs of a more forward-thinking outlook are, however, countered by *Woman's Weekly's* conservative treatment of sexuality and concerns about women's double burden. Many domestic discourses, whilst recognising negative aspects of fulltime housewifery, admit no alternative for married women, and positive depictions of homemaking may even be fuelling domestic discontent.

During 1958, *Woman's Weekly's* target readers are markedly wealthier than during any other year surveyed. But whilst their material circumstances have improved, they remain – relative to readers of glossier, more expensive titles – lower middle class, their status distinguishable, as before, by their values as well as by their presumed incomes. Practising productive leisure, still looking to disguise the effects of rough housework yet willing to perform manual domestic labour, they retain the ambivalence towards leisure-class domestic culture they displayed during the year following the Armistice. During the final year covered by this survey, *Woman's Weekly* readers' incomes have grown, but their relative class status and distinguishing values remain unchanged.

Conclusion

Throughout the years reviewed by my thesis, *Woman's Weekly* has offered its readers an inexpensive blend of practical advice and escapism, the balance of which shifts in accordance with their perceived needs and desires. Its interests are primarily domestic and the majority of its target readers are housewives, although some work in paid occupations that, it assumes, they will leave when they marry. During a period of considerable social disruption and change, the magazine offers ideological continuity; ideologically it tends towards conservatism, most notably in its conception of gender roles and relations. I stated at the beginning of my Introduction that my thesis had two broad aims: to map changes and continuities in the domestic culture constructed by *Woman's Weekly* between 1918 and 1958, drawing out its distinctively lower-middle-class status in doing so; and to produce a new literary methodology for exploring periodicals. In concluding, I return to these aims; since my literary approach to producing a depth study of *Woman's Weekly* establishes the originality of my work, I begin with the second.

As I asserted in my Introduction, my thesis aimed to show that periodical studies has much to offer the field of literature research. It has sought to achieve this in the following ways. To begin with, it has broadened understandings of reading culture, showcasing for the first time a literary corpus that was being read alongside what nowadays have become better-known novels and poetry. Indeed, boasting a bought readership of over 1 million by the 1950s, *Woman's Weekly* might even claim to have been more widely read by its contemporaries than some of the works to which I have compared it. Surveying the magazine within

broader literary contexts, I have highlighted its uniquely lower-middle-class contribution to a reading culture that reflects and shapes contemporary attitudes and values. In doing so, I have enriched our sense of this culture.

In showcasing a formerly under-explored literary corpus, my thesis draws critical attention to a wealth of under-investigated texts. Popular domestic magazines, my survey of *Woman's Weekly* suggests, contain rich pickings for scholars of the middlebrow and popular fiction. Some of these texts have been written by well-known writers; by studying them, we gain a fuller sense of their output, and develop new contexts in which to understand their other works. In surveying *Woman's Weekly's* romance narratives, I have explored ways in which a magazine's non-fictional discourses assimilate and exploit thematic and formal characteristics that are distinctive of its fictional genres. My thesis indicates, therefore, that periodicals can present scholars of literature with the means to examine how fictional genres function in other discursive contexts, developing understandings of their potential uses and *modus operandi* in doing so.

By close reading *Woman's Weekly* illustrations alongside its verbal texts, I have explored how its pictorial discourses contribute to the production of meaning, creating contexts within which readers might understand its verbal discourses, reinforcing ideologies, and articulating certain values implicitly. Effectively, I have shown how a domestic magazine might be approached as a romance narrative composed of pictorial and verbal discourses of equal status.

Finally, my thesis suggests that magazines, planned and produced over months, can offer a more immediate gauge of their cultural conditions of production than novels, which can take years to produce. Two notable points of difference between *Woman's Weekly* fiction and adjacent literature illustrate this.

During the year following the Armistice, returning soldiers in the magazine's stories regain their pre-war masculinity quickly – only a few show signs of the 'effeminacy' traced by Humble and Dixon in interwar middlebrow and romance fiction. Likewise, *Woman's Weekly* romance heroes are aggressively healthy during the final year of peace before the outbreak of the Second World War – Humble, however, suggests that male characters in middlebrow fiction do not regain their physical and psychological authority until after this conflict. By including magazine fiction in literary surveys of the period, critics might, therefore, discover that the terrain is more nuanced than studies focusing exclusively on novels might indicate.

In approaching *Woman's Weekly* from a literary perspective, I have paid close attention to the status of romance fiction in the magazine. I have suggested, firstly, that its primary function is the provision of escapism from the stresses and anxieties of daily life; in providing escapist fantasies, I have argued, it offers safe spaces in which readers might work through potentially distressing events and issues, and compensatory happy endings for those experiencing the latter in real life. A key focus has been the exploration of ways in which romance fiction in *Woman's Weekly* functions as ideological reinforcement, using a heroine with whom readers are supposed to identify to make certain values desirable by rewarding her conduct with marriage. To the extent that it functions as a guide to readers' own conduct therefore, I have approached romance fiction in *Woman's Weekly* as an index of legitimation, and used it to trace shifts in the values underpinning its constructions of lower-middle-class femininity during the years surveyed. In particular, changing attitudes towards women working in paid employment have surfaced through close readings of the magazine's workplace

romance fiction; I have also used *Woman's Weekly's* romance stories as a gauge for measuring its target readers' social aspirations. Finally, I have used romance, a genre strongly concerned with upward social mobility, as a model for understanding the discourses of self-improvement into which *Woman's Weekly* works its target readers, and with which it seeks to ensure their continuing loyalty. Using *Woman's Weekly's* fiction as a starting point, my innovative literary methodology has shown how the romance genre can be used to understand a popular domestic magazine's ideologies, its functions, and its relations with its target readership.

Broadly, my literary depth study of *Woman's Weekly* has drawn out much ideological contradiction within the lower-middle-class domestic culture produced by the magazine between 1918 and 1958. The equal desirability of leisured and servantless housewifery is one example of this; others include urging wives to remain at home whilst providing them with material incentives to find paid employment, censoring office flirts whilst suggesting that the workplace could be a profitable husband-hunting ground, expressing disapproval of class pretence whilst urging readers to renovate their clothes in line with the latest expensive fashions, and urging readers to undertake so-called masculine war work whilst demanding that they remain 'feminine', a conflict I attempt to resolve by suggesting that these contradictory gender identities reflect the pressures and expectations of total war on *Woman's Weekly* readers. The magazine's apparent discomfort with consumerism is, likewise, difficult to square with its consumerist message. During 1919, it chastises a working wife for spending her earnings on luxuries, it obliquely criticises Britain's burgeoning

consumer culture during 1958, and champions domestic productivity throughout, yet is itself a commodity and, filled with advertisements on which it depends increasingly for income, is complicit in fuelling its readers' desires to consume. Furthermore, *Woman's Weekly* portrays housewifery idealistically, but acknowledges that fulltime domesticity can be dull and arduous. With the exception of readers' wartime gender identities, these conflicts are impossible to resolve within the magazine; rather than seeking to resolve them, I suggest that contradiction and conflict are prime distinctions of the lower-middle-class culture it constructs.

Arguably, the ideological contradictions characterising *Woman's Weekly's* lower-middle-class domestic culture are caused in part by the magazine's form. Produced by multiple artists and writers, including members of its readership, the title comprises a "mixed discourse"¹ of pictorial and verbal texts representing a variety of viewpoints. Without appropriate editorial records, the extent to which the resulting ideological contradictions are intentional or accidental is impossible to determine – perhaps editors hoped to prompt debate, perhaps writers slipped provocative features under the radar. What seems likely is that, rather than targeting a single reader with multiple interests and views, *Woman's Weekly* seeks to attract a range of readers whose interests and views may not coincide exactly, although they belong to the same social class. I have shown that, during the years reviewed, *Woman's Weekly* assumes a readership that is diverse in terms of age and even gender (although not ethnicity or sexuality – its target reader is manifestly white, British, and heterosexual

¹ Stuart Sillars, *Visualisation in Popular Fiction, 1860-1960: Graphic Narratives, Fictional Images* (London: Routledge, 1995), 75-90.

throughout). Although this readership seems to mature throughout the period, this is impossible to tell for certain, and in any case, during 1958 the magazine is clearly courting teenage girls. In viewing *Woman's Weekly's* target readership as multiple I differ from Beetham, who argues that magazines' form reflects the heterogeneous feminine identities they shape for their readers² – whilst I agree that femininity is multi-faceted and that this is reflected in the form and subject matter of periodicals aimed at women, I would add that *Woman's Weekly's* heterogeneity probably reflects a multiple readership. Like *Round the Horne's* Kenneth Horne, who claims to read fictional organ *Physique Pictorial* for its gardening section, *Woman's Weekly's* readers may perhaps buy the magazine for its recipes, knitting patterns, or fiction.³ In thus seeking to attract a broad readership, *Woman's Weekly* is looking to its profits and circulation figures, within an increasingly competitive market that, by the end of the period I review, is about to be threatened by television.

In the Introduction to my thesis, I constructed a relational model of social class with which to establish the distinctively lower-middle-class status of *Woman's Weekly*. In concluding I now return to this model, to offer a summative overview of the magazine's constructions of lower-middle-class culture throughout the years I have surveyed. Itself classifying as lower middle class in relation to other popular domestic titles, *Woman's Weekly* supplies its socially ambitious target readership with criteria with which they can establish their superiority to working-class women – one of their main social goals, itself

² Margaret Beetham, *A Magazine of Her Own? Domesticity and Desire in the Woman's Magazine, 1800-1914* (London: Routledge, 1996), 1.

³ Barry Took and Mat Coward, *The Best of Round the Horne* (London: Boxtree, 2000), 159.

distinctively lower middle class. These criteria include choice of (non-manual) occupation, the ability to give up paid work after marriage, lack of class pretension, lack of interest in horoscopes, sexual respectability, the ability to take holidays, knowledge of leisure-class lifestyles and conduct, and the possession of distinctively middle-class status anxieties that produce desires to acquire the latter. Moreover, *Woman's Weekly* readers are keen to develop their knowledge of 'high' aesthetic culture; readers of comparative working-class magazines manifestly are not. I have also used level of aspirations to distinguish between magazine readerships in terms of status. But whilst *Woman's Weekly* distances its readers from working-class women in these respects, the magazine shares certain features with the working-class titles to which I compare it. All publish romance fiction by 'lowbrow' popular authors, and all avoid engaging with current affairs, a feature of middle-middle-class *Good Housekeeping*. These shared distinctions, which complicate *Woman's Weekly* readers' aspirations to established middle-class status, produce a sense of proximity between working-class and lower-middle-class domestic culture, which, implicitly acknowledging the working-class origins of some *Woman's Weekly* readers, helps to explain their evident social insecurity.

My Introduction stated that my thesis would address whether or not *Woman's Weekly* believes that class status is acquirable, and the extent to which the magazine even claims that the status distinctions it sells are leisure class. In doing so, I stated, it would seek to distance the lower-middle-class domestic culture produced by *Woman's Weekly* from the cheap, easily accessible, bogus reproductions of leisure-class culture described by Bourdieu in his delineation of the lower-middle-class middlebrow. My study has suggested that these issues are

complex in *Woman's Weekly*. On the one hand, the magazine does make cheap, ersatz leisure-class cultural distinctions available to its readers; by openly acknowledging their ersatz status however, it distances the latter by implication from claims made by Bourdieu and Crosland that the lower middle classes are incapable of recognising cultural inauthenticity. This acknowledgement, along with its overt social education of its readers, demonstrates a level of social self-awareness denied lower-middle-class culture by Bourdieu. Reinforcing this sense of social self-awareness, *Woman's Weekly* is ambivalent towards domestic leisure, assuming that its readers, whilst eager to distinguish themselves from working-class women, do not share established middle-class housewives' anxiousness to keep up appearances of being able to afford domestic help. Moreover, *Woman's Weekly* presents servantless domestic productivity as a point of moral superiority to idle leisured housewives. Encouraging its readers to regard themselves as custodians of social morality, especially during and after a war that put society's moral codes under considerable stress, the magazine elevates the status of lower-middle-class culture itself, indicating, in doing so, that it views itself as distinct from the leisure-class culture it implicitly critiques.

To the extent that *Woman's Weekly* is consciously selling ersatz leisure-class cultural distinctions to a readership that it encourages to feel ambivalent towards leisure-class culture, the magazine refutes Bourdieu's model of the middlebrow, producing instead an ideologically distinctive lower-middle-class domestic culture founded partially on moral disapproval of domestic leisure. Having said this, *Woman's Weekly* readers *are* assumed anxious to acquire certain leisure-class distinctions, and, in providing the means to acquire them, *Woman's Weekly* does create the impression that it believes class status to be

acquirable. Knowledge of leisure-class lifestyles and etiquette helps readers to distinguish themselves from working-class women; the magazine's use of reader-flattery as a teaching method bespeaks a readership eager to be classified as leisure class already. My thesis suggests, however, that *Woman's Weekly* does not fulfil these promises to help its readers achieve class elevation. Aside from during the Second World War and 1948, when they were subject to rationing and shortages, target readers' economic status clearly improves throughout the period. Their relative class status remains static, however: although their living standards are manifestly rising, they appear to be rising at the same rate as the living standards of *Good Housekeeping's* middle-middle-class target readers, with the effect, therefore, that they can never catch up with the latter. This sliding scale of relational status is, in part, an effect of magazines' efforts to retain their respective niches in the market by continuing to address readers in the same class band: although they may have done so in practice, *Woman's Weekly* readers as they are constructed by the magazine will never 'graduate' to *Good Housekeeping*, since their social education by the former is never completed. Within a constantly changing socio-economic culture, the magazine continually presents its readers with new ways in which they might improve themselves, offering thereby incentives to keep buying. Social stasis, although it contradicts *Woman's Weekly's* manifest programme of self-elevation, is the price of the long-term loyalty into which the magazine hooks its readers. Thus, although *Woman's Weekly* helps lower-middle-class culture to develop, and gain stature and confidence during the years reviewed, by remaining within the lower-middle-class bracket of Britain's magazine market it maintains its readers' lower-middle-class status throughout the period. To this extent therefore, the

magazine reinforces Bourdieu's assertion that class status cannot be acquired.

Although *Woman's Weekly's* target readership becomes markedly better off between 1918 and 1958, it remains lower middle class.

Based on my thesis, exciting and valuable lines of future research present themselves. The process of surveying hundreds of magazines, currently accessible in full only on site at the British Library in either St Pancras or Boston Spa, revealed the necessity of developing a digitised, searchable magazine archive. Such an archive would make an as yet largely unexplored literary corpus more broadly accessible, within and outside the academy; moreover, it would vastly reduce the amount of time spent searching for references, and it would also enable quantitative readings and comparisons, opening up new ways of surveying enormous amounts of data. One model for a searchable archive is Trove, the online media archive of the National Library of Australia, which contains digitised, searchable copies of a number of periodicals, including *The Australian Women's Weekly*. A British equivalent would also, therefore, enable domestic magazines to be explored in an international context: especially given *Woman's Weekly's* assumption of a colonial readership during the years surveyed by my thesis, this is a hugely exciting prospect. The development of a digitised magazine archive would also enhance a project exploring one motif across genres. My research suggests that domestic women's magazines issued during the early-mid-twentieth century are extremely anxious about the appearance of their readers' hands as it relates to their class status; *Peg's Paper* and *My Weekly* share *Woman's Weekly's* fascination, advertising hand creams as a means of disguising the physical effects of factory work in order to attract

aristocratic husbands, and, in palmistry features, teaching readers to look for signs that they will come into an unexpected inheritance or marry advantageously. The ability to search a range of titles, quickly, would be immensely useful to a researcher surveying representations of women's hands in popular literary culture produced during that period.

My Introduction drew attention to concerns expressed in 2015 by Patrick Collier that literature is currently “underrepresented” in periodical studies, and that periodical studies has so far done little to expand the field of literature.⁴ In response to these concerns, I suggested that my thesis, a literary depth study of a popular domestic women's magazine, would represent a point of convergence between literary criticism and periodical studies. I began this Conclusion by assessing the contributions made by the study of periodicals to literature research that are suggested by my thesis; I will end by suggesting what periodical studies might take from my literary approach. In researching and writing my thesis, I have produced a literary methodology that can be used and developed by other periodical scholars. My thesis models a contextualisation of popular magazines within a reading culture that includes novels and poetry as well as other magazines; a depth study supported by close readings, it suggests how, by treating periodical form as a literary aesthetic, new ways of exploring the themes, functions, and *modus operandi* of a magazine, and its relations with its target readership, can emerge. Focusing on a single magazine, with which it makes strategic comparisons to other titles, my thesis highlights the importance of acknowledging economic and ideological stratification within a magazine market, and suggests ways in which this might be explored. Ultimately, my

⁴ Collier, “Periodical Studies?” 104.

thesis has forged connections between two related disciplines that I hope subsequent scholarship will develop and strengthen. Like a single issue of *Woman's Weekly*, it contributes one more instalment to an ongoing, open-ended narrative.

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